MAHOMET.

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Mahamad, the Prophet. 3
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THE

LIFE

OF

MAHOMET;

OR, THE

HISTORY of that IMPOSTURE,

WHICH WAS

BEGUN, CARRIED ON, AND FINALLY ESTABLISHED BY HIM IN ARABIA;

AND WHICH HAS

Subjugated a larger Portion of the Globe, than the Religion of Jesus has yet set at Liberty.

TO WHICH IS ADDED, AN

ACCOUNT OF EGYPT.

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PREFACE.

BIOGRAPHY is at once a pleaſing and intereſting ſtudy. The lives of particular perſonages, whether they have been conſpicuous for their vices or their virtues, cannot be peruſed by a rational enquirer without unſpeakable advantage. The pious mind reviews with abhorrence the conduct of the voluptuary, or the ambitious, blood-thirſty tyrant, while it feels a ſecret ſatisfaction and tranſport on peruſing the hiſtory of an eminent character. Accordingly there is a ſome-

thing in the life of a Julius Cæſar, or an Alexander the Great, which is peculiarly diſguſting to unbeclouded reaſon, notwithſtanding the high place they occupy in the eſtimation of the world, while the life of a Beliſarius, a Solon, or a Socrates, cannot fail to be admired. In the two firſt, we behold many ſplendid vices and magnificent follies, if I may ſo ſpeak, which we ought to avoid and deteſt, while the lives of the three laſt exhibit the ſum total of human excellence, and perhaps the greateſt height of perfection attainable on this ſide the grave. Biography, then, is the glaſs in which human nature appears without any diſguiſe, and in which we behold in ſome characters ſuch an aſſemblage of ſupereminent virtues; and in others ſo many horrid and deteſtable vices, together with the happy or awful conſequences reſulting therefrom to the poſſeſſors, as cannot fail to determine our choice in favour of morality, if we are not abandoned beyond the hope of reſtora-

reſtoration. Hence the life of the greateſt profligate becomes intereſting to ſociety, as it may be productive of happier conſequences in the peruſal of it, than the moſt highly finiſhed ſermon or eſſay on the excellence of moral virtue. What pious lecture on the horrid nature and alarming conſequences of vice can touch the heart ſo forcibly, as to read in the life of Nero, that wickedneſs brought that monſter to the neceſſity of ſtabbing himſelf, on account of the inſupportable agonies of a guilty conſcience, when neither friends nor enemies would be ſo merciful as diſpatch him?

Viewing things in this light, it was thought that an accurate, well-digeſted life of MAHOMET, or MOHAMMED, according to the genuine pronunciation of the original word, would be an acquiſition to the chriſtian world, not unworthy the peruſal of thoſe who are friends to revealed religion. That arch Im-

poſtor has deluded a larger portion of the habitable globe, than the philanthropic ſyſtem of the Lord Jeſus Chriſt has yet undeceived, reſcued from ruin, and crowned with ſalvation. The means by which he accompliſhed this ſtupendous effect, will render him an object of execration to every rational being, and heighten the importance and beauty of the chriſtian religion, by making a contraſt. It will draw the tear of ſympathy from the eye of pity, to behold a voluptuous, ignorant, ambitious wretch, impoſing upon millions of his fellow-creatures, and give the Son of God and his ſyſtem ſuch a decided ſuperiority, as will at once make the chriſtian triumph, and the deiſt look confuſion, anger, and chagrine.

In compoſing the ſubſequent hiſtory of the life of Mahomet, the author has been careful to arrange the moſt material and important incidents in the order of time in which they happened, and to conſult only the writings of

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ſuch men as could not be reaſonably ſuſpected of partiality or party ſpirit. It was ſaid by Voltaire, that in order to be a good hiſtorian, a man ſhould have no country; and, I may add, in order to be a good controverſial writer, a man ſhould have no religion. As both theſe qualifications, however, are totally impoſſible, that man muſt be the beſt hiſtorian and writer of controverſy, who is leaſt partial to his native country, and deſtitute of an enthuſiaſtic attachment to any ſyſtem of opinions. Accordingly, ſuch authors have been conſulted as ſpoke of Mahomet occaſionally, and with ſeeming indifference, as if they neither believed nor rejected what they have tranſmitted to us as hiſtorical facts. If the teſtimony of ſuch men is not to be depended on, it would be difficult to point out any who are deſerving of public credit.

As the mere enumeration of facts, or compilation of circumſtances concerning the life of Mahomet would be far from intereſting, the author has, on every ſuitable occaſion, made ſuch moral reflections as ſeemed naturally to ariſe out of the topics before him, which is the very ſoul of hiſtory, and in which many hiſtorians and biographers are extremely defective. The Coran has been carefully conſulted, and the whole texture of that ſyſtem which forms the Arabian bible, impartially examined. Some uſe has been made of Hottinger's oriental hiſtory, the writings of Dr Pocock, and the travels of Mr Pitts, of Exeter, who was compelled for ſome time, through extremity of torture and barbarous uſage, to ſeem to be a convert to the religion of Mahomet, while a ſlave at Algiers. In ſhort, no labour has been deemed too great, in order to obtain every authentic document reſpecting this Impoſtor, as the magnitude of the

the revolution he accompliſhed, muſt be highly intereſting to the whole chriſtian world.

Such as it is, I here preſent it to the indulgence of candour, being my maiden performance in the character of an hiſtorian; for were I writing on theology, I ſhould aſk no more than ſtern juſtice from the moſt intelligent men in Europe.

THE

THE LIFE OF *MAHOMET.*

WE are informed by hiſtorians, that many famous cities, diſtinguiſhed above others for literature and commerce, contended which of them ſhould have the honor of being the birth-place of Homer. He was the prince and father of poets, and has acquired the juſt admiration and aſtoniſhment of the world. Such a conteſt was, therefore, commendable,

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as it evinced the high opinion which men at that period had of unexampled merit. But when the character of Mahomet is attentively ſurveyed, whether delineated by friends or enemies, the picture is ſo completely ſhocking, that it is a wonder the place of his nativity has not been buried in oblivion. Any country might bluſh to have produced ſuch a monſter. So great, however, has the veneration of the Arabians for this arch deceiver always been, that they have not left it problematical where he firſt drew his breath. Every thing concerning him was deemed of too much importance not to be made public, when even his remarks in the courſe of converſation were conſidered as oracles. He was born at Mecca, a city of Arabia,* famous for nothing ſo much

* This extenſive country, which forms a part of Aſia, is divided into three parts, viz. Arabia Felix, Arabia Deſerta, and Arabia Petrea. A juſt idea of its ſterility, in moſt places at leaſt, may be formed from the ſtarving condition of the Iſraelites while paſſing through it to Canaan.

as for the pilgrimages made to it, both before and after the eſtabliſhment of his religion, if it be not a proſtitution of the word to give it ſuch a name. He was deſcended from a tribe called the Koraſhites, ſaid to be the moſt conſiderable in point of influence and wealth, the two great idols of human ambition. The origin of this tribe was one Pher Koraiſh, who had no doubt acquired his importance by rapin and plunder, which appears to have been the chief trade of that unhappy country. This being the true deſcent of Mahomet according to the teſtimony of the moſt reputed authors, he was not a man of that obſcure, mean, and deſpicable origin, which many have aſſerted. Thoſe who read little and think leſs, are ever apt to be led away by thoſe accounts of a perſon they diſlike, which they imagine will degrade him in the eſtimation of the world. This has often been the unjuſtifiable conduct of too many chriſtians, forgetting that it would not have diminiſhed the ſterling worth

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of Mahomet, had he been poſſeſſed of any, although he had been brought forth by a beggar at the root of a hedge; nor will it ever detract from that juſt infamy which he has brought upon himſelf in the eye of true diſcernment, that he was the hated ſpawn of opulence and power. The nature and circumſtances of a man's birth being wholly independant of himſelf, make no part of the value or inſignificance of his character. But as to Mahomet, it is not true that his parentage was mean and obſcure. It is indeed a popular blunder, which paſſes with the ignorant as a matter of fact, and which Mr Paine has adopted in his Age of Reaſon, owing to the circumſcribed nature of his education. "Moſes," ſays he, "was a foundling, Jeſus Chriſt was born in a ſtable, and Mahomet was a mule-driver." The deſign of this ſentence is too obvious to require a comment; for at any time he would barter his reputation,—I had

almoſt

almoſt ſaid, his ſoul, for a ſtroke at chriſtianity But to proceed with our narrative.

Mahomet's father died when he was only two years of age, which involved his mother Amena and himſelf in poverty and diſtreſs. All the wealth of which his father was poſſeſſed devolved to his uncles, the principal ſhare of which became the property of Abu Taleb, that uncle who ſupported him ſo powerfully in the propagating of his impoſture, and preſerved him on many occaſions from being cut off by his enemies. Six years after the death of his father, his mother died alſo, and thus he became an almoſt deſtitute orphan at an early period of life. His grandfather indeed, whoſe name was Abdol Motallah, took him home to his houſe, but he enjoyed the benefit of his generoſity only a ſhort time, for he died the following year. Then Abu Taleb, his uncle, took him under his protection, and, in the language of oriental hiſtorians,

maintained him out of charity. To an Engliſh ear this expreſſion will ſound very ſtrangely, ſince, if Abdol Motallah divided his wealth among his ſons, the property of Mahomet's father belonged to him in right of heritage, more than to any of his uncles. But as juſtice among the Arabs had no ſhare in the accumulation of riches, it would ſeem that ſhe was as little conſulted in transferring them from one generation to another. But the iniquity of ſuch a ſtep is removed, if we conſider the property of his grandfather not to have been divided, but deſcending from father to ſon like a landed eſtate. In this caſe it became the legal poſſeſſion of the ſon next in age to his own father, and, therefore, if Abu Taleb was that perſon, he loſt it not by injuſtice. His father dying before his grandfather, Abu Taleb then became the eldeſt ſon, and of conſequence the rightful heir. In this view of the matter, it was Mahomet's misfortune

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that he loſt his father before the death of Abdol Motallah, and cannot be conſidered as a crime in his uncle. With Abu Taleb he lived ſixteen years, being trained up by him to the employment of a merchant, the chief ſource of wealth among the great men of that country. The ſterility or barrenneſs of moſt parts of Arabia, made landed property altogether inſignificant, and incapable of yielding even the neceſſaries of life. They traded to Syria, Perſia, and Egypt, carrying thither ſuch articles of commerce as they received from India, Ethiopia, and other ſouthern regions of the globe. It is reaſonable to conclude, that Mahomet ſerved his uncle with fidelity and advantage, as he left him of his own accord.

At this period, being now twenty-five years of age, a circumſtance happened in Mecca, peculiarly favorable to the advancement of

his projected ſcheme. A merchant of conſiderable wealth and influence dying in the city, his widow, to whom he left the whole of his poſſeſſions and ſtock in trade, reſolved to carry on the traffic of her huſband by which he had acquired his eminence. But being deſtitute of a perſon properly qualified for an agent or factor to foreign countries, ſhe applied to Mahomet. Whether ſhe knew him to be fit for this office, or depended on the atteſtations of ſu h as were well acquainted with him, is not certain, but ſhe made him ſuch eligible and inviting offers as he did not deem it prudent to reject. Being taken into her ſervice in the above capacity, he diſcharged the duties of his office to her entire ſatisfaction for the ſpace of three years, travelling with her goods into Syria, Perſia, and Egypt, and bringing back ſuch advantageous returns as did not fail to pleaſe. In the courſe of his mercantile travels, he became acquainted both with jews and chriſtians, whoſe religious opinions he would

would no doubt examine with as much attention as privacy would allow, or opportunity afford. He found both parties, wherever he went, miſerably divided among themſelves, which he no doubt conſidered as a favorable ſymptom, and a powerful encouragement to expect their ſpeedy acceptance of the impoſture which he was ſoon to make public. When religious controverſy riſes to ſuch a height as to extinguiſh every ſpark of love, confidence, and reſpect, and kindle a ſpirit of jealouſy and perſecution, men are almoſt prepared for the reception of any thing, however abſurd, if it promiſes a removal of their preſent calamities. The want of unanimity has been the deſtruction of all communities, civil and religious, in every age of the world. Mahomet undoubtedly underſtood this; and it will appear, from the ſubſequent hiſtory of his life, that he made his own uſe of it. His countrymen alſo were devoted to the belief of thoſe tenets which were known by the name

of Zendiciſm, having a ſtrong reſemblance to the opinions of the Sadducees among the Jews; for they denied a providence, the immortality of the ſoul, and the reſurrection from the dead. This being almoſt equivalent to atheiſm, or no religion whatever, they were in a ſtate very favorable to his deſigns, and the more eaſily wrought upon by his artifice and cunning. Like a piece of clean paper, they were ready to receive the firſt impreſſions that offered, and we ſhall afterwards find that thoſe made by Mahomet had the deſired effect; for nothing almoſt was proof againſt his inſinuations and addreſs.

He was now twenty-eight years of age, enjoying the advantages of a good exterior figure, as all hiſtorians allow, which being united to that winning mode of addreſs he ſo eminently inherited from nature, and which he could no doubt ſucceſsfully em-

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ploy in the management of love affairs, as well as of deluſion; he gained an entire victory over the widow's heart. Cadigha, for that was her name, could no longer reſiſt the artillery of Mahomet's accompliſhments, but gave him her heart and her hand in the fortieth year of her age. Had not the Impoſtor's ambitious views been to him inſtead of every thing elſe, it is not probable that he would have married a woman twelve years older than himſelf; but her extenſive fortune opened to him the delightful proſpect of reaching the completion of his fondeſt wiſhes. I draw this inference from the practice afterwards adopted by him, always ſelecting ſuch women as were younger than himſelf. He was eſpouſed to his beloved Ayeſha when ſhe was only ſix years of age, and the marriage was actually conſummated when ſhe was no more than eight! As females in moſt parts of the globe within the torrid zone arrive at woman-hood at the age of nine or ten, a woman

man of forty in Arabia muſt be as conſtitutionally old as one of ſixty in Britain. Nor is it likely that Cadigha would have married her ſervant, had not he been poſſeſſed of a ſomething which is always captivating in the eyes of thoſe females who pay little reſpect to the more ſublime accompliſhments of the mind, and more eſpecially if he had not been much younger than herſelf. But my lady Cadigha was far from being ſingular in wiſhing to have a huſband who might have paſſed for her ſon, for this prepoſterous deſire is viſible in the generality of females, although fairly entered on the down-hill journey of life.

Mahomet's ambitious views being thus highly gratified, and his extenſive influence, ariſing from the fortune which this union brought him, conſpiring to favor his deſign, he began ſeriouſly to think of the moſt proper method of divulging his impoſture. It cannot be determined whether he conſidered himſelf

ſelf as injured by the revolution which took place in his affairs upon the death of his father; but certain it is, that he made every action of his life ſubſervient to the obtaining the ſovereign authority over the city of Mecca, which his anceſtors had ſo long enjoyed. But as he rightly judged that the well-known profligacy and wickedneſs of his life would form inſurmountable barriers in the way of his ſucceſs, he reſolved to lead a life of ſeeming ſanctity and actual retirement for the ſpace of two years. He could not be ignorant that the venerable and intereſting title of Apoſtle of God, or meſſenger from heaven, was totally incompatible with a licentious courſe. Voluptuous and depraved as his countrymen were, the ſhrewdneſs and ſagacity which they poſſeſſed in a conſiderable degree, could not fail to dictate to them the incongruity between his wonted mode of life and a claim to inſpiration. About the age of thirty-eight, he took up his almoſt daily reſi-

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dence in a ſolitary cave nigh to the city of Mecca, where he pretended to be favored with viſions from the Almighty. When he returned home at night, he endeavoured to perſuade his wife of the truth of thoſe wonderful relations, but it ſeems her incredulity was at firſt too great, to be ſhaken by ſuch aſſertions. She could not conſider them in any other light than as the reſult of a diſpoſition to play the wag; but when he perſiſted with the utmoſt ſolemnity to vouch for their truth, ſhe concluded him to be deranged. He next told her that, in the fore-mentioned cave, ſacred to the communication of important diſcoveries from on high, he had repeated conferences with the angel Gabriel, employed by Jehovah to bring him down the Coran,* which

* As people are generally accuſtomed to call this book the Alcoran, it is proper to inform them why I name it as above. In the Arabic tongue, AL ſignifies THE, and therefore the Alcoran is as much as to ſay the, the Coran, which is abſurd.

which was to contain the religious ſyſtem of doctrines and precepts that heaven deſigned for his countrymen. But here again he met with his wonted oppoſition, for his unbelieving ſpouſe was determined to give credit, neither to the one nor the other. She treated both as the production of a diſtempered brain, not apprehending the abominable purpoſe for which they were fabricated.

At this time there was a monk reſiding in his houſe, who being privy to the Impoſtor's deſign, and greatly aſſiſting to him in bringing it to maturity, came opportunely in with his aſſeverations, juſtified Mahomet in all he advanced, and finally made a convert of the once incredulous Cadigha. What will not patience and perſeverance accompliſh! They ought to be his companions, who is concerned in any laudable undertaking which is the work of time, but in the ſupport of a bad, they are eminently uſeful. They who em-

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bark in the defence of error and deluſion, require a command of temper and an aſtoniſhing preſence of mind, as they muſt expect to meet with much irony and ridicule, and have to grapple with a multitude of objections for which they cannot always be prepared. This was the caſe with Mahomet, in propagating his impoſture, who, from his firſt attempt to convince his wife of the divinity of his miſſion, to the time at which he took up the ſword in its defence, a period of no leſs than thirteen years, was continually expoſed to ſcoffing and ridicule, to laughter and contempt. Yet he never once appeared to be angry, bearing all the indignities that were offered him without ſeeming to repine. As ungovernable ſallies of paſſion in ſupport of truth, never fail to injure its reception in the world, ſo it is no leſs certain, that even error itſelf loſes its native deformity by degrees, when ſupported with mildneſs, compoſure and diffidence. I am not warranted to ſay, from any hiſtorical information

mation to which I have had acceſs, that he inherited from nature this government of himſelf. From the moſt minute attention to his life, conſidered as a connected whole, I am apt to believe that he was either of a moroſe and ſullen, or of an haſty, paſſionate temper; for the propagation of his religion by the ſword has nearly as much the air of rancour and revenge, as a determined reſolution to puſh the advantages he had obtained. But before he ſounded the minds of his countrymen, on which depended the probability of his ſucceſs, his cunning and ready wit no doubt pointed out the neceſſity of diſguiſing his temper.

Men of an ominous diſpoſition, who are fond of alluſion and allegory, think they diſcover ſome portentous event in every accidental circumſtance. To people of this turn of mind it will be a rich treat to underſtand, that Mahomet withdrew to the cave near

Mecca, the very year in which the tyrant Phocas granted liberty to the biſhop of Rome to aſſume the title of univerſal paſtor. At the time when Antichriſt was climbing to the ſummit of his impious dignity in the northern, a monſter was forging the chains of deluſion for the ſouthern hemiſphere. Whether ſuch things are brought about by the immediate interference of God, or happen according to the eſtabliſhed laws of nature, it is not my deſign at preſent fully to inveſtigate. The Supreme Being, I ſhould humbly apprehend, is as much concerned in them as in other works of his hands, when by the wonderful law of vegetation he makes a tree to germinate, bloſſom, and bear fruit. If Mahomet went to the above-mentioned cave in the very year in which the grant of Phocas was obtained, I do not ſee that it proves any thing more than ſuch an aſſertion as this;—that ſome perſon or other was born in the very year, the very month, and perhaps on the very

very day on which the author of these pages was born. These observations are chiefly intended to check that spirit of misticism too prevalent in the world, which has produced more ridiculous jargon and nonsense than reason will soon abolish. Unfortunately, however, for those who wish to make more of this story than a natural occurrence, the dates affixed to the two events will not bring them together. Mahomet was born in the year of our Lord five hundred and seventy-one; the grant of Phocas is dated six hundred and six, and the Impostor took up his residence in the cave at the age of thirty-eight. Now, 38+571=609, which carries the one three years beyond the other. If he was born in the beginning of 571, the odd year will make one year of his age; and then it will be 571+37, or 570+38=608, two years after the grant of Phocas. Finally, as the Arabs computed by lunar years, Mahomet was only thirty-six years old and something

more than ten months at the time of his retirement; that is, almoſt thirty-ſeven. If then you add this to 570 or 571, it will give 607 or 608 nearly, none of which periods will agree with the other. If theſe two events muſt be made to coincide exactly in point of time, one of three concluſions muſt be admitted; either that Mahomet was not born in 571, or that the grant of Phocas was not obtained in 606, or that the Impoſtor did not retire to the cave at the age of thirty-eight. But as all the above dates have the concurring teſtimony of the moſt reputed authors extant, it is the faireſt and moſt rational concluſion, that the two events did not happen at the ſame time. It is the duty of an hiſtorian to paſs over nothing of importance, whether it be ſo as to its nature or its conſequences; and, therefore, I have been the more particular in the above criticiſm, as there is often more in the accurate inveſtigation

tion of dates than a ſuperficial reader is apt to imagine.

Mahomet, at the age of forty, after compleating the period of his probation in the cell, aſſumed the title of apoſtle of God, with none but Cadigha as the fruit of his exertions, only venturing, however, to practiſe on the credulity of his domeſtics and very near relations, ſince their influence, if it could be obtained, would give him additional encouragement to try his ſucceſs with the public. For the ſpace of four years, the converts to his new religion were only nine in number. This gloomy proſpect required a degree of patience too big for the ſhock of diſappointment. And here I beſeech all zealous, hot-headed chriſtians to remember, that his having obtained ſo few proſelytes for ſuch a length of time, can be no proof, abſtractly conſidered, of the badneſs of his cauſe; for even truth itſelf, when it is entirely new, will

be received at firſt with ſhyneſs and ſuſpicion. I ſpeak thus, becauſe I never wiſh to refute error but by ſolid arguments, undeniably rational, and not by the ſpawn of fancy, whim, or ill nature. We ſhall preſently find him abundantly wicked, without the pitiful ſubterfuge of ſhift or evaſion.

Recollecting the recluſe and auſtere life he had led in the cave, and expecting to feel the good effects of it, from the reputation for ſanctity which it had probably acquired him; he opened his impoſture to the people at the age of forty-four. The leading ideas of all his diſcourſes were, that God is one; that he himſelf was the prophet of God, ſent to declare his will to men; and that they who affirm the Almighty to have ſons or daughters are chargeable with impiety, and ought to be deteſted. It was unqueſtionably his deſign to inveigh againſt the doctrine of the trinity by one part of this aſſertion, and to con-

condemn the idolatry of his countrymen by the other. They were ſtrongly addicted to the worſhip of three female deities, known by the names of Allat, Menah, and Al Uzza, whom they impiouſly denominated the daughters of God. As it was to be expected, the ridicule and oppoſition he met with from his hearers, put his counterfeit patience to many ſevere trials; for I have ſaid before that I do not ſuppoſe it was genuine. People did not heſitate to pronounce him a ſorcerer; they openly called him a liar, and viewed every thing he uttered as impertinent and fabulous. It is almoſt impoſſible to conceive how mortifing it muſt have been to his native pride and ambition, to be treated with leſs ceremony than a ballad-ſinger. As the fictitious mildneſs of his temper prevented him from betraying the wickedneſs of his intentions, or giving ground to ſuſpect him as the author of a forgery, by flying out into guſts of paſſion; ſo his ready wit,

wit, of which he muſt be acknowledged to have had a very large ſhare, ſeldom deſerted him altogether on any critical emergency. Yet, amidſt the innumerable objections he had to encounter on all hands, many of which he could not always be in readineſs to obviate, he was ſometimes left in abſolute ſilence, to the no ſmall diverſion of thoſe who oppoſed him. The cauſe he had eſpouſed being ſo deſperately wicked, and ſo utterly incapable of being ſupported by argument, we cannot wonder if he were ſometimes at a loſs for a fetch of cunning, to ward off the rational objections that fell ſo thick upon him from every quarter, on his firſt appearance in public. When a man undertakes the taſk of a Mahomet, it would require the artifice of the devil himſelf to bear him always through. Yet aſtoniſhing to relate, he did go through with it, and for the ſpace of thirteen years employed nothing like compulſion. His wonderful patience under perſecution, and his for-

forbearing to revenge any inſult, though he could certainly have wiſhed to do it, had a very conſiderable ſhare in blunting the edge of oppoſition. Add to this, that he had a peculiar talent of flattery, which he levelled againſt the weak ſide of the great and opulent with ſuch a maſterly hand, that he procured their protection, and made many of them converts. It is ſo extremely natural for mankind to love commendation, that few are always proof againſt its moſt formidable attacks. If any are ſo, it muſt be the man who has not only an extenſive education, but a penetrating judgement, and an enlarged underſtanding. To ſuch a man flattery always appears, either as the diſguiſe of wickedneſs, or a deſign to ridicule. The partition between flattery and honeſt praiſe is ſo very thin, that a wiſe man will reject all commendation beſtowed upon him to his face, that he may not run the hazard of being impoſed on, nor carried out of himſelf by the ſuggeſtions of vanity. But

thoſe

thoſe with whom Mahomet was concerned, were not proof againſt flattery under his artful management. He gained the aſcendancy over many of the firſt rank in life, which he no doubt conſidered as a favorable prelude to the ſurrender of the poor. Although he laboured four years for four converts to his cauſe, yet the next year of his pretended miſſion added thirty to their number. The influence of example is always very powerful, but that of the opulent over their dependents and inferiors can ſeldom be reſiſted. His affluent circumſtances put it alſo in his power to bribe the needy, which he brought in to aſſiſt the example of the great; and the united force of theſe two accompliſhed his deſign.

It has often been ſaid that poverty is a foe to honeſty, and perhaps it is capable of doing as much miſchief to a man's religious creed. The offer of plenty to him who is plunged into

into the extremity of want, is a ſtrong temptation to make a ſacrifice of conſcience. This effect it procuced in the deſerts of Arabia, where men of little religion had the leſs ſacrifice to make. A craving ſtomach ſpoke louder than reaſon, and the loaves and fiſhes wrought wonders in his favor. In addition to all the arts we have already mentioned, he inceſſantly applied to thoſe paſſions of the human mind in his promiſes and threatenings, which were chiefly conſulted in the regulation of their conduct. Their hopes and fears felt his heavieſt artillery, as the heaven and hell of his own manufacturing will abundantly evince. In his paradiſe, he ſaid there were many rivers and curious fountains, continually ſending forth pleaſing ſtreams. Near theſe, he told his followers, they ſhould repoſe themſelves on moſt delicate and ſumptuous beds, adorned with gold and precious ſtones, under the ſhadow of the trees of paradiſe, yielding them all manner of pleaſant fruits;

fruits; and that there they ſhould enjoy moſt beautiful women, who would not caſt an eye on any but themſelves. He likewiſe aſſured them of receiving moſt delicious liquors and pleaſant wines, without having their enjoyment interrupted by intervals of intoxication. I forbear to quote any more of this fulſome ſome ſtuff, but ſurely it was a tid bit for the ſtomach of an Arabian, conſtitutionally addicted to the love of pleaſure, and entirely ſuited to the palate of its voluptuous author. It is not difficult to make men believe what they wiſh to be true, and of conſequence no picture of human happineſs to be enjoyed in futurity, could have been drawn, ſo completely capable of ſubduing their oppoſition, inflaming their deſires, and of triumphing over the dictates of reaſon and conſcience. In the barren, parched ſands of Arabia, what could be ſo much an object of deſire as a cooling ſhade from the almoſt vertical rays of the meridian ſun, or copious draughts of refreſhing, cooling liquors,

liquors, to men burning with thirſt? Such images increaſed the native impetuoſity of their paſſions, and hurried them into the vortex of his impious deluſion.

But if his deſcription of heaven was peculiarly inchanting to thoſe whom he aimed to deceive, his hell was no leſs terrible to the ſame deſcription of men. He affirmed, that ſuch as would not receive his divine meſſage ſhould drink boiling and ſtinking water, breathe nothing but hot winds, dwell for ever in continual fire, and be ſurrounded with a black, ſalt ſmoke; eat briars and thorns, and the fruit of the tree zacon, which would be in their bellies like burning pitch. It is aſtoniſhing with what artifice and cunning theſe portraits are delineated. How terrible muſt it have been to a native of the torrid zone, viſited with the intolerable heat of the ſun, reflected from the burning ſands as from the mouth of an oven, and whoſe very zephyrs

were fire, to think that ſuch would be his ſtate through everlaſting ages, if he ſhould continue to reject the inſpiration of the Coran! By the perpetual ſounding of ſuch rewards and puniſhments in the ears of his countrymen, Mahomet terrified ſome, and allured others, into the belief of his miſſion. But he had ſtill another engine for battering down oppoſition, and that was, his threatening the moſt dreadful judgements here upon earth, in caſe of non-compliance with his favorite ſcheme. He gave them to underſtand, that the old world was deſtroyed by a deluge for their diſobedience to Noah; that Sodom was conſumed by fire and brimſtone from heaven for its treatment of Lot, and the Egyptians drowned in the red ſea for rejecting the miſſion of Moſes. To theſe and ſuch like inſtances of the divine diſpleaſure againſt the workers of iniquity, headed a fiction of his own about the de-

ſtruction

ſtruction of Ad and Thamod, totally deſtroyed for ſimilar reaſons. Now, if land be an object of deſire to the ſhipwrecked mariner, drink to the parched tongue, or eaſe to ſuch as are tormented with the gout, all the promiſes and threatenings of Mahomet muſt have been equally the objects of deſire and averſion. And here it is obvious to remark, that there was no ſort of analogy between the above judgements, which reaſon would ſoon have pointed out to the Arabs, had not their hopes and fears been their principles of action. It was a ſophiſtical inference, that becauſe the Egyptians and Sodomites were made the viſible monuments of the wrath of inſulted heaven, therefore all thoſe who rejected his claim to a divine commiſſion would alſo be puniſhed; for they were rendered inexcuſable by their open contempt of the warnings of Jehovah, or the miracles which were performed to ſubdue their unbelief; whereas the Arabians rejected the lunatic pretences of

a man who could only aſſert, without a ſingle evidence of the truth of his aſſertion.

In the above manner he continued to propagate his impoſture, which acquired additional ſtrength ſo faſt, that many whom no promiſes could as yet allure, nor threatenings intimidate, began to be alarmed. Such as were ſupremely ignorant, and exceſſively addicted to idolatrous worſhip, could not hear his invectives againſt ſuch a practice without fear or indignation. To have pulled the meat from their mouths under the moſt pungent ſtings of hunger, would not have been conſidered as greater injuſtice and barbarity than the exclaiming againſt their deities. But men of penetration and diſcernment were alarmed for another reaſon. They ſaw a ſyſtem of tyranny and oppreſſion making rapid ſtrides towards maturity, which, if not finally ſuppreſſed in a ſtate of infancy, might ſoon diveſt them of all their poſſeſſions. This made

made them reſolve to cut off the object of their terror and diſguſt, let the conſequences be what they would, as they rightly judged that, of two evils, the leaſt ſhould be choſen. Humanity itſelf can ſcarcely help lamenting that they did not ſucceed; but by the timely interference and vigorous exertions of Abu Taleb his uncle, he was delivered from premeditated maſſacre, to be a ſcourge to the world. It does not appear that this man ever eſpouſed the religion of his nephew, but ſuch was his affection for him, far exceeding what is commonly found in that degree of conſanguinity, that all his power and influence became devoted to his ſervice, when in danger from his enemies. It affords a ſtrong proof of the goodneſs of Abu Taleb's underſtanding, that he did not become a convert to the deluſion of Mahomet, while the protection he afforded him in the hour of peril, is an evidence of ſingular attachment, or commendable gratitude. The reaſon why I ſpeak of

gratitude is, becauſe Mahomet having ſerved him ſixteen years, as has formerly been obſerved, he very likely was of ſingular advantage to him in the way of traffic, at leaſt for more than one half of the period during which he remained with him. The knowledge of his trade would not be a difficult acquiſition to one of Mahomet's ſagacity and ſhrewdneſs, ſo that Abu Taleb had perhaps twelve years of his aſſiſtance for nothing more than his food.

Mahomet being conſtantly urged to work miracles in confirmation of his pretended miſſion, by all thoſe who continued proof againſt his arts of ſeduction, he was galled to the very ſoul, and greatly at a loſs what anſwer to return. But being now ſo accuſtomed to the ſneers of waggery, or the terrible blows of reaſon and argument, he received them as things of courſe, and his preſence of mind co-operating with his ready wit,

wit, ſeldom left him for any length of time in total ſtupefaction. He, therefore, told them, without ſeeming to be much diſconcerted, that the working of miracles formed no part of his apoſtleſhip, being entirely limited by God to the preaching the rewards of paradiſe and the puniſhments of hell—the dignity of his own character, and the ſubmiſſion which all men were required to pay to him as the prophet of God. Soon, however, did he perceive the impotency of this argument. They conſidered it as reaſoning in a circle, to prove his miſſion by itſelf. If you are divinely inſpired, let us ſee your credentials, for God will ſend no man upon ſuch an errand as you aſſert you are come on, without ſuch undeniable tokens of the veracity of the meſſenger as all men muſt believe, if not reſolutely blind. Finding the people more than a match for him in canvaſſing the merits of this excuſe, he had recourſe to another

which

which he deemed more concluſive. He ſaid that their predeceſſors had treated the miracles of Saleh and other prophets of their own country with ſuch ridicule and contempt, that God was determined they ſhould never have an opportunity of behaving ſo again. If we ſuppoſe that this nonſenſical ſtory was an object of general belief among the Arabs, as I think it was, it behoved to have greater weight with his hearers than his former apology. If it were a legend of his own fabrication, he would take care to lay the ſuppoſed ſcene of thoſe miracles at ſuch a diſtance from Mecca, as to put it out of the power of the objectors to contradict him to his face. But being afraid that even this might fail to produce the intended effect, he ſaid that all thoſe whom God had from eternity ordained to believe, would do ſo, without the aid of miracles, while thoſe whom he determined ſhould not believe, could not be converted by ten thouſand miracles. This was the juſtly exploded

ploded doctrine of fate and deſtiny, which many of the antients conſidered as above the Almighty,—as a blaſphemous, inexpreſſible ſomething to which God himſelf was ſubject. Yet even this, which is no more like the ſcripture doctrine of predeſtination than the eaſt is like the weſt, or the light of a glow-worm like that of the ſun, would not anſwer his purpoſe. He therefore obſerved, that Moſes and Joſhua were frequently diſobeyed and rejected by wickedneſs and unbelief, which made God ſend him laſt of all to compel them by the ſword.

It may here be remarked that, although Mahomet diſclaims, in his Coran, the power of working miracles, for the reaſons already mentioned, yet ſome of his admirers have aſcribed many to him which are miracles with a vengeance. It ſeems he was capable of cleaving the moon in two, which no doubt re-

required a very deſperate ſtroke, even from a prophet's arm! They tell us alſo that trees went out to meet him; that water flowed from between his fingers; a beam groaned at him; a camel, poor creature, complained to him; poſſibly knowing him to be a prophet ſent to redreſs all grievances; and a ſhoulder of mutton informed him that it was poiſoned. Stories have often been invented by wicked men, with a deſign to depreciate chriſtianity in the world; but I dare not ſay that this bundle of abſurdities was the production of any wag for a ſimilar purpoſe, ſince Arabian writers relate them who were ſuperſtitiouſly attached to every thing Mahomet either ſaid or did, and who would not have uttered a ſyllable to his prejudice, had they viewed it in ſuch a light.

Perceiving that there was little probability of augmenting the number of his proſelytes by

by the various arts he had hitherto employed, but that a cauſe ſo intereſting to him was rather on the decline, he reſolved to effectuate by violence what he could not accompliſh by dint of argument. The number of his adherents muſt, however, have been very conſiderable, before he could venture to undertake ſuch a hazardous enterprize, ſince his ambitious views were blaſted for ever, and his very life at ſtake, if he did not ſucceed. Thoſe who ſay the feweſt, allow him to have had five hundred, others a thouſand, and others more. Finding that his cauſe would flouriſh no longer at Mecca for the preſent, and that every moment's delay only increaſed his danger, by ſtrengthening the rage and fury of his oppoſers, he fled to Medina with as many as would follow him. This city is about two hundred and ſeventy miles diſtant from Mecca, to which he certainly fled in conſequence of an invitation. This favorable turn of fortune he improved in the beſt manner to his advantage, and the number of his fol-

followers increaſing ſo faſt, he reſolved on the reduction of Mecca with all convenient ſpeed. The genuine diſpoſitions of the man now began to ſhew themſelves in all their native deformity, and to evince that rapin and murder were the darlings of his ſoul. When his cruelty or injuſtice offended any of his diſciples (for the moſt beſotted attachment could not always commend) a chapter of the Coran put every thing to rights. It was a plump argument, that God authoriſed and countenanced him, and to gain the belief of his followers to ſuch a daring aſſertion, was to magnify his villainy into ſomething meritorious. Of the loweſt conceptions which the moſt ignorant man can form of the Supreme Being, this is certainly one, that he can do nothing amiſs; and conſequently he who is believed, in all he does, to be executing a commiſſion entruſted to him by heaven, muſt be ſecure from cenſure amidſt the revels of a bagnio.

Soon

Soon after his arrival at Medina, he built a houſe for his own accommodation, depriving ſome poor orphans of the ground upon which it was erected. Such a barbarous deed excites pity in the bare relation of it, but this great prophet of God could perform it without any compunction! It is matter of lamentation to the good man, and of triumph to the infidel, that religion has been ſo frequently made the imp of wickedneſs in every age of the world. It is a melancholy proof that no degrees of impiety will ſhock ſome men, and an evidence of the ſtupidity of the multitude, in believing that the very worſt of crimes can be the offspring of religion.

As all authors are agreed, that Mahomet lived thirteen years at Mecca, and ten at Medina, at which place he died, and as his famous trip to heaven is placed in the twelfth year of his pretended miſſion, it will be proper to take ſome notice of it here. Being in bed one night with his beſt beloved wife

Ayeſha, he had a very familiar viſit paid to him by the angel Gabriel. On examining the performances of Raphael, Tytian, or Van Dyke, I do not find that they ever painted an angel with more than two pinions. It follows, therefore, that they have never favored the world with a picture of Gabriel, ſince Mahomet, who behoved to know the true ſtate of the matter, informs us that he had ſeventy brace of wings! It ſeems too, that he is as much maſter of etiquette as any teacher of manners whatever, for he very politely rapped at Mahomet's door. On gaining admittance, he ſhook the good old prophet moſt lovingly by the hand, telling him that he was ſent to conduct him to the divine preſence, to receive the finiſhing touches of his glorious miſſion. A galloway called Alborak, as white as milk, was ready to carry him, a beaſt on which the prophets had ridden ſome thouſand years before. But while Gabriel held the bridle till Mahomet ſhould mount, the creature

ture began to kick and plunge with ſuch fury and deſperation, that he could not get up. Had the ſtupid animal known the honor that was intended him, in being employed to carry ſuch a load of holineſs on ſuch an important errand, inſtead of exhibiting ſo much ruſticity and want of breeding, he would have neighed with tranſport. However, a lucky thought came into the good man's head at this critical juncture, which accompliſhed his aim. He faithfully promiſed to Alborak, that if he would let him mount without any more ado, he ſhould be rewarded in the end with a ſeat in paradiſe. And to ſay the truth, the paradiſe of Mahomet is fitter for quadrupeds than for rational beings. This had its intended effect, when away they ſet for Jeruſalem much quicker than lightning. Alborak being faſtened to the foot of a rock, they inſtantly reached the firſt of the ſeven heavens, compoſed entirely of ſolid ſilver. Here was an old, decrepid man, who turned out to be Adam, the father of us all, and who,

embracing the prophet with great tenderneſs, thanked God for giving him ſuch a ſon, as well he might; for certainly he was a moſt hopeful and promiſing child! Here too he ſaw the ſtars hanging by golden chains ſuſpended from the roof, which is a hint to you, ye advocates for the Copernican ſyſtem, who abſurdly believe that the planets roll round the ſun! At the diſtance of five hundred years journey, according to the uſual rate of travelling upon earth, they reached the ſecond heaven, which was all of pure gold. In it he met with Noah, who, from a deep conviction of his inferiority, recommended himſelf to his prayers. The third heaven was of precious ſtones, in which Abraham reſided; but a ſight of him was a trifle, compared to an angel on whom he gazed with aſtoniſhment. The diſtance between his eyes was ſeventy thouſand days journey, and conſequently his whole height was five millions forty thouſand, or four times as high as all his heavens put together, ſince each was diſtant from the

other

other five hundred years journey. You muſt not be ſurpriſed if he ſtood right up between the third and fourth, although higher than all the ſeven; for if you cannot give it your reaſon, an Arabian can give it his faith. You may ſay, indeed, that it requires pretty ſtrong faith; but ſurely it calls for no ſtronger belief than the roman catholic poſſeſſed, when he exclaimed, on his being fairly conquered by argument, "*credo, quod impoſſibile eſt!*" The diſtance between a perſon's eyes is to his whole height as one to ſeventy-two, and therefore it will be

$$\frac{70000\times72=5040000}{354}=14237 \text{ years the}$$

height of the angel. Now $500\times7=3500$ and $\frac{14237}{3500}=4$, the number of times he was higher than the whole ſeven heavens.

The fourth heaven was made of emerald, in which Joſeph dwelt:—The fifth was of adamant, the reſidence of Moſes, with whom he had a conference:—The ſixth was of carbuncle, the abode of John the Baptiſt; and the ſeventh of divine light, where he found Jeſus Chriſt. It is worthy of obſervation, that all whom he ſaw in each heaven recommended themſelves to the efficacy of his prayers; but he confeſſes that he himſelf requeſted the prayers of Chriſt. I do not ſuppoſe that this humility was genuine, but that he paid him this compliment to flatter the chriſtians, who had always greater indulgences from him than the Jews, and whoſe favor and friendſhip he ſtudiouſly courted. There was alſo a very remarkable angel in this higheſt heaven, for he had no fewer than ſeventy thouſand heads (Mahomet, you ſee, did not deal in trifles) in each head ſeventy thouſand tongues, and each tongue uttered ſeventy thouſand diſtinct voices at once. That is, he ſpoke audibly three hundred

dred forty-three millions of millions of words in an inſtant, for 70000×70000×70000== 343000000000000; and therefore if he could write with the ſame expedition, he muſt have been able to compoſe eighty-five millions, ſeven hundred and fifty thouſand folio volumes almoſt in the twinkling of an eye, though we allow four millions of words to each!!! On Mahomet's arriving within two bow-ſhots of the throne of God, he perceived his face covered with ſeventy thouſand veils, but when he came near it through water and ſnow, the hand of the Almighty was ſo cold when laid upon his back, that it penetrated to the very marrow. Having obtained important ſecrets which it was not lawful to utter, and having been informed that he ſhould be (which was the very cream of the journey) the greateſt man upon earth, he was conducted back again by Gabriel to the foot of the rock, where mounting Alborak, he was preſently at home.

Should

Should it be complained that I have narrated this journey in a ludicrous manner, my apology is, that, inheriting from nature a ſatirical turn of mind, and never having met with a ſubject in the whole compaſs of my reading which more juſtly deſerved to feel the thongs of ridicule, it was abſolutely impoſſible for me to let it paſs with impunity. All attempts to be ſerious in the recital of ſuch conſummate extravagance would, in my judgement, have been as much out of place as lamentation at a wedding, or a magnificent ball on the interment of a friend. The Arabians themſelves could not help laughing at it, when it was related by him next day. Some of his converts were perfectly aſhamed, and it occaſioned a conſiderable diminution of his influence for a little; but by the timely and artful interference of Abu Beker, another of his uncles, the defection was prevented from increaſing. This man was a convert to the truth of his pretended miſſion, and ſucceeded him in the regal and pontifical dignity.

nity. It became next a ſubject for diſcuſſion whether it was a real journey or a viſion, which gave riſe to much altercation among his followers. The more rational part of them would have had it only a viſion or a dream, ſince they found it by no means ſafe to give the prophet the lie by declaring it a fabrication; but that it was a real journey was the opinion which gained the victory, as it had Mahomet and Abu Beker on its ſide. The Impoſtor himſelf having now had conſiderable experience of the ſucceſs of his Coran, when viewed as a revelation, determined to give currency to this journey of his by another chapter, in which he brings in God himſelf as vouching for the truth of every particular. The contemplative mind ſtands aſtoniſhed at this ſtupendous wickedneſs, and wonders how human nature could perpetrate ſuch deliberate villainy. But indeed, when the ſtings of conſcience are ſo blunted as to permit a man with impunity to commence an Impoſtor,

there

there is nothing in the whole compaſs of human depravity at which he will ſtartle.

Being now at Medina, and enjoying the attachment of a conſiderable body of men, he made frequent attacks upon the adjacent towns and villages, diſtributing the booty taken from the vanquiſhed among his ſoldiers, and reducing the inhabitants to ſlavery, who procured their emancipation by the acceptance of his religion. In ſhort, after he had ſubdued Mecca, which he was not long in accompliſhing after his flight from it, he carried his victorious arms through the greater part of Arabia, and even into Syria, till he put his cauſe out of the reach of danger, if continued to be ſupported in the ſame bloody manner. Such was the terror and conſternation which his victories occaſioned every where, that many places ſurrendered to him which he had not actually viſited in perſon, whoſe inhabitants procured their liberty on the common terms of bartering their conſciences.

Having

Having reduced Mecca, the place of his nativity, which he marched againſt with about ten thouſand men, he put to death all thoſe whom he ſuſpected to be his moſt inveterate enemies, giving pardon to the reſt on a formal recantation; and having committed the government of the city to a confidential deputy, he returned to Medina. It muſt be allowed, that few men have the greatneſs of ſoul to forgive an injury, when it is in their power to puniſh the offender without danger to themſelves; but ſurely a meſſenger from heaven ſhould have poſſeſſed this qualification in an eminent degree. Ah, Mahomet, Mahomet, when I ſee thy ſword reeking with the blood of men, and hear Jeſus exclaiming upon Calvary, "father, forgive them, for they know not what they do;" I am obliged to conclude that the devil was thy conſtituent. It is commonly ſaid, that men have a peculiar regard for the place where they firſt breathed the vital air; yet, although

Mahomet

Mahomet might have felt this propenſity in a very high degree, he did not deem it ſafe to dwell any longer in a place where he might every moment run the riſk of being ſecretly diſpatched.

The Arabs compute their time from the period at which Mahomet fled from Mecca, which they call the Hegira, a word that in their language ſignifies *flight*. This is ſimilar to the Grecian method of computing from the firſt inſtitution of the Olympic games, and the Roman practice of dating from the foundation of the city. Formerly the Mahometans computed from the laſt war in which they had been engaged. At Mecca, they reckoned from the æra of the elephant, and that of the impious war. The firſt was undertaken againſt the Ethiopians, who made much uſe of elephants in all their battles. The other commenced in the twentieth year of the former, and was carried on in thoſe months on which the Arabians deemed it impious

pious to commence hoſtilities; for they often made an armiſtice on the approach of any of them, if peace was not concluded before they commenced. They were the 1ſt, 7th, 11th, and 12th. The names of the twelve are theſe:

Moharram,	Rajib,
Saphar,	Shaban,
The former Rabia,	Ramadan,
The latter Rabia,	Shawall,
Former Jomada,	Dulkaada,
Latter Jomada,	Dulhagha, having

twenty-nine and thirty days alternately, making a total of three hundred fifty-four days, or a lunar year, by which they computed, as we ſaid before. But having ſome odd hours and minutes (for the moon does not complete her annual revolution exactly in three hundred fifty-four days) they made uſe of intercalation as well as we do.* Every fourth

* The odd time of each lunar year is eight hours forty-eight minutes, which amounts exactly to eleven days in the ſpace of thirty years, ſo that they muſt then add

year is with us a leap year, becauſe ſix hours in the ſpace of four years amount to one day. But ſince by making the time of the earth's annual revolution three hundred ſixty-five days, ſix hours, we in fact call it fourteen minutes twenty-four ſeconds more than it is, we gain a whole day in a hundred years beyond actual time. Now, as every hundredth year behoved otherwiſe to be a leap year, for $\frac{100}{4} = 25$,* without any remainder; inſtead of aſſigning twenty-nine days to February, even

add a day to each month except one, to preſerve accuracy of calculation. But inſtead of adding all theſe days in one year, and thus making each thirtieth year ſolar, it is ſaid that they add a day to the ſecond, fifth, ſeventh, tenth, thirteenth, fifteenth, eighteenth, twenty-firſt, twenty-fourth, twenty-ſixth, and twenty-ninth years of that period, during which their year has 355 days. See Scaliger de emendatione temporum.

* As it is probable that ſome may read this book who are not acquainted with figures, it is proper to inform them

even in a centennial leap year, we give it only twenty-eight, which brings us back to that accuracy of calculation for which Britiſh aſtronomers are ſo famous.

Mahomet having a deep rooted enmity againſt the jews, made war upon all thoſe adjacent tribes who profeſſed that religion. It is perhaps difficult to aſſign a reaſon why his animoſity had neither limits to its rage nor termination to its exiſtence; but I find one circumſtance mentioned by ſome authors, which the Impoſtor might view as a vindication of its occaſional ſallies. A certain jew named Caab, having a brother who had eſpouſed the religion of Mahomet, he compoſed on the occaſion a very ludicrous poem,

them that $\frac{100}{4}=25$, is as much as to ſay, 100 divided by 4 is equal to 25. This may ſerve as a key to the reading any other group of figures.

in which he exhibited the fooleries and nonſenſe of that religion in ſuch a ſatirical light, that the prophet determined to take vengeance on every tribe profeſſing judaiſm on his account. Such, I know, is the tendency of ſatirical compoſitions, if well written, that they muſt unavoidably exaſperate the perſons againſt whom they are levelled, if they do not reclaim them. Rage being the effect which Caab's poem produced, Mahomet gave ſtrict orders to apprehend, and bring him to condign puniſhment. And in order the better to ſecure the performance of his command, he offered a reward to the perſon who ſhould ſeize him. On his being apprehended and brought before him, the poem was recited by the author in his hearing, after inſerting the name of Abu Beker inſtead of Mahomet, which it ſeems occurred very often, expecting thereby to mitigate his fury. But finding him by no means inclined to the ſide of clemency for this alteration, Caab had recourſe

to

to an expedient which anſwered his purpoſe, reſcued him from impending deſtruction, and even obtained him the intimacy and patronage of the prophet. The Impoſtor having received a new miſtreſs by way of preſent (for every body knew how fond he was of this ſpecies of veniſon) an object, it ſeems, who was the very darling of his ſoul; Caab wrote a poem in commendation of her charms, ſo exactly ſuited to the palate of the old leacherous rogue, that he buried his reſentment in an exceſs of kindneſs.* Preſence of mind, if it be not a virtue, is nevertheleſs of ſuch import-

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Men who, like Mahomet, are under the abſolute dominion of appetite and paſſion, are at all times as ſuſceptible of flattery as the weakeſt of the other ſex. Had the Impoſtor adverted to the critical ſituation in which Caab ſtood, he might eaſily have ſuſpected the ſincerity of the encomium; but his blind attachment to his beloved miſtreſs prevented him from reflection. A prince might juſtly queſtion a man's profeſſions of loyalty when about to ſuffer for treaſon, but Mahomet's natural ſagacity was eaſily extinguiſhed by his love of ſenſual pleaſure.

ance to its poſſeſſor, that it frequently delivers him from greater trials, difficulties, and embarraſſments, than any of the four which are denominated cardinal.

The whole life of Mahomet after his flight to Medina, was one continued ſcene of butchery and rapin. He, with his aſſociates and followers, plundered every caravan of its valuable commodities, if not guarded by a force ſuperior to his own, in which caſe he was obliged to make a precipitate retreat in order to ſave his life. It often happened, however, that there aroſe much diſputation among his followers how the booty ſhould be divided, to which he put a final period by the eighth chapter of his Coran. He there aſſigned one-fifth part to himſelf, and ordered the reſt to be divided among his ſoldiers Strict diſcipline and ſubordination are not eaſily kept up among freebooters and thieves, for even the captain of a ſuch a gang will ſoon dwindle into

into contempt, and perhaps be in danger of loſing his life, if he diſcovers a determined reſolution to have an immoderate ſhare. Such is the nature of his employment, that he muſt rather make his portion the reſult of their conceſſions, than of his own ſtern authority. With this fact Mahomet ſeems to have been perfectly acquainted, and therefore as he had ſmall hopes of compoſing their differences or ſilencing their murmurs by his exertions as a man, he had recourſe to his old trade of fetching authority from heaven, and made God the umpire between him and his followers. He was very fortunate in his battles, if ſucceſs in a deſperately wicked cauſe deſerves the appellation; but amidſt the wonderful and myſterious viciſſitudes of human affairs, it was not to be expected that he would always be victorious. The moſt diſtinguiſhed favorites of fortune, whether in the ſenate or the field, never experienced uninterrupted ſucceſs. At the battle of Ohud he was obliged to retreat, having loſt a conſiderable

ſiderable number of his men, whom he left dead on the field. As many of his adherents concluded that the prophet of God would be invulnerable, and his army crowned with univerſal triumph, they could not help murmuring againſt him on the loſs of their relations, which, as it betrayed a ſpirit of diſaffection, he prepared himſelf to ſuppreſs. He attempted to perſuade them, that their defeat was to be aſcribed to the wickedneſs of ſome who followed him, againſt whom it thus pleaſed the Almighty to teſtify his diſpleaſure. It is no doubt true, that the Supreme Being has ſometimes ſhewn his hatred of vice by the complete diſcomfiture of the vicious; but Mahomet very artfully attributed the wickedneſs in this caſe to an improper ſource. If, inſtead of conſidering it as a puniſhment for the ſins of his followers, he had honeſtly confeſſed that it was for the crimes of their leader, I ſhould have given him credit for the acknowledgement, and con-

conſidered it as pretty near the truth. In addition to this he made uſe of an old expedient which had frequently ſerved his turn upon former occaſions—his beloved doctrine of fate and deſtiny. He obſerved that the very moment of every man's death is fixed, beyond which no caution can ever carry him, nor the greateſt negligence or danger prevent him from reaching. That it is all one as to the time of his departure, whether he is at home or in the field of battle. But he gave the finiſhing ſtroke to his ſophiſtry upon this ſubject by affirming, that ſuch as expired in battle in defence of religion, would unqueſtionably be rewarded with a ſeat in paradiſe. Nothing equal to this could have been invented to make men fight with ungovernable fury and deſperation, which the very certainty of periſhing behoved to ſtrengthen. As the proſpect of death increaſed, their brutal ferocity would riſe higher and higher, ſince the point of the ſword was their paſſport to heaven. A man of an enlarged underſtand-

ſtanding may be aſtoniſhed how ſuch nonſenſe could become a ſubject of belief; but let the fact be admitted that it was believed, and then the conſequences muſt follow which we have ſtated above.

It would be an almoſt endleſs taſk to give even a catalogue of his numerous, or rather numberleſs wars, and therefore I ſhall confine myſelf to thoſe which more or leſs affected his circumſtances in the world, promoted or retarded the completion of his fondeſt wiſhes, or which were any way inſtrumental in accelerating his death. When he compelled the city Chaibar to ſurrender, he took up his lodgings in the houſe of a principal inhabitant, being accompanied by an officer whoſe name was Baſhar. Sitting down to ſupper, very likely with a pretty ſharp appetite, they fell upon a ſhoulder of mutton which had been prepared for their entertainment. It is ſaid by different authors, that a ſhrewd, ſenſible

ble girl, the landlord's daughter, took care to give it ſuch a ſeaſoning as might have made it their laſt meal upon earth. In plain Engliſh, we are told ſhe poiſoned it, and that it proved inſtantly fatal to Baſhar, who died upon the ſpot. Mahomet himſelf not reliſhing the taſte of it, ate very ſparingly, and beholding the tragical end of his officer and companion, ſpat out the morſel that was then in his mouth. It ſeems, however, that he had previouſly ſwallowed ſo much as was ſufficient to ſhatter his robuſt conſtitution, and lay it in the ruins in the ſpace of three years. Few vegetable or mineral poiſons, I believe, are known to the learned of this country, but ſuch as accompliſh the diſſolution of the body in a very few hours, if not diſlodged from the ſtomach by powerful emetics. Yet I have read of poiſons which did not accompliſh their object till the end of many years, operating as ſlowly as a chronical diſtemper, and bringing down to the grave with the ſame gradual diminution of health and ſtrength,

ſtrength, as if the perſon poiſoned had been in a conſumption. Thoſe who aſcribe miracles to Mahomet, contrary to his own acknowledgements, probably allude to this piece of fleſh when they ſay, that a ſhoulder of mutton told him it was poiſoned. If this was the caſe, it had whiſpered to him in ſo low a tone as not to be heard, or elſe it had only vociferated when it was too late. Be that as it may, the whole contexture of this ſtory renders it extremely ſuſpicious. It muſt be allowed, that the current of ancient hiſtory runs in favor of its truth, but having undertaken to write a hiſtory of the life of Mahomet, and having ſaid in the preface to this little work, that more is expected from a man in ſuch a ſituation than a bare recital of facts; I ſhall give my reaſons for ſuſpecting its veracity.

The Impoſtor had reduced this city to obedience by his victorious arms, and therefore we may conclude that its inhabitants would ſhew him all poſſible reſpect, however much

ſtrained

ſtrained and contrary to their real ſentiments that reſpect might be, ſince he had it in his power to add butchery to conqueſt. True indeed, ſome individuals have been found among men, who could make the moſt deſperate attempt to recover the independence of their fellow citizens, and loſe all ſenſe of ſelf-preſervation in the magnitude of the idea. Brutus could diſpatch his beloved Ceſar, to preſerve the liberty of his country from the aſſaults of deſpotiſm; but I find nothing in the character of Mahomet's landlord which can rank him with a Brutus. He muſt have been either an innkeeper, or a private perſon of property. If he was the former, it certainly would not ſtrike him to take ſuch a ſtep, ſince the prophet's money to be paid for the entertainment was as good as another's. If the latter, his invitation was the reſult of hoſpitality, and the fartheſt in the world from a deſign to murder. It will be to little purpoſe to ſay, that the perpetrators of this deed

would reaſon with themſelves thus:—If their prophet and general could once be cut off, his ſoldiers will become ſo entirely diſpirited and incapable of reſiſtance, as either to ſurrender to the mercy of the town, or betake themſeves to a precipitate flight, and hide their ſhame and diſappointment in the ſhades of obſcurity. This would have been a deſperate ſuppoſition, in which the odds were twenty to one againſt them. Beſides, the whole of this tranſaction is aſcribed to a giddy girl, to which her father is not once ſuppoſed to have been privy; and therefore to make her reaſon in ſuch a manner, to draw remote and dubious conſequences from premiſes beyond the reach of a childiſh underſtanding, exceeds all power of belief. When interrogated why ſhe ventured to commit ſuch a horrible crime, ſhe is made to reaſon with the acuteneſs of an Ariſtotle. She ſaid (reader, believe it if you can) that if he really was a prophet, he would certainly know that the meat was poiſoned, but if he was not, ſhe

con-

conſidered it as highly meritorious to rid the world of ſuch an infamous wretch. Here we have a view of things aſcribed to a wench, perhaps not fifteen years of age, who diſcovered a degree of ſagacity and diſcernment not always to be met with, even in a man of fifty. But to crown the whole, we hear nothing of any ſignal puniſhment inflicted on the offender by Mahomet, who was left in a ſituation to avenge himſelf of his adverſaries, nor is it ſaid that his ſucceſſor took the ſmalleſt notice of it in a vindictive manner.

As to the ſingle circumſtance of his dying by poiſon I have no objection, but there muſt be ſome other way of accounting for it than that which paſſes current with the public. The perſons who poiſoned him, if they did it through deſign, would undoubtedly have kept their own ſecret, ſince the making it public was their ſpeedy deſtruction. If it was the reſult of accident, we ſhould not have

heard the girl reaſoning like a philoſopher on the merit of her conduct. In a word, it ſeems to me to be involved in impenetrable darkneſs how or by whom he was poiſoned, without admitting a number of abſurdities at which reaſon recoils. Poiſoned, however, he was, as he acknowledged on his death-bed, and therefore in my judgement, all that can be ſaid with certainty is this. Mahomet having experienced the ſnare laid for him, either by mere accident, or the ſuperior ſenſibility of his palate, might perhaps think of turning this circumſtance to his advantage, or of allowing his followers to make as much of it as they could, in heightening his prophetic greatneſs. As there was probably none preſent but Baſhar to witneſs what quantity he devoured, he might aſcribe his eſcape to the immediate hand of God, whoſe prophet he pretended to be, and that he was placed beyond the reach of danger by his heavenly conſtituent. This idea might ſuppreſs his reſentment, and induce him to make no minute

enquiry

enquiry after the cauſe of this calamity, having eſcaped himſelf. But it is poſſible that Mahomet's opinion of his having been poiſoned might be purely fanciful. Might not Baſhar be ſo faint with hunger as to go off like one in a trance, when the victuals overpowered his ſtomach, in which condition his ſoul might make her exit?—In travelling between Newcaſtle and Edinburgh, I was once ſo faint before I would ſtop to take any refreſhment, that ſome roaſted mutton and potatoes, of which I ate voraciouſly, deprived me, for ſome moments, of all conſciouſneſs of exiſtence, in which condition it was extremely probable that I might have died, had not the inceſſant application of ſtimulating remedies brought me about. Fainting fits, whether they originate from eating too eagerly after long abſtinence, or that debility of the whole ſyſtem which frequently characteriſes the man of a ſtudious and ſedentary life; they ſo nearly reſemble an apoplexy, that I preſume no medical gentleman will deny the poſſibility

of their proving fatal. Now, if Baſhar died in this manner, it would have nearly the ſame effect upon Mahomet as if he had been actually poiſoned. The power of imagination is ſo ſtrong, that no man can have adequate conceptions of its force who has not made ſome experiments.*

His

* Having mentioned the power of imagination as the probable cauſe of this wonderful ſtory, it may be farther elucidated by the ſubſequent remarks. What aſtoniſhing effects has it frequently produced in pregnant women, ſo that their offspring have received a taint from thoſe things which inſpired them with grief, terror, or joy. Nay, it has ſometimes gone ſo far, if reſpectable authors are deſerving of credit, as to ſend them into the world with a deficiency or redundancy of members. It has created a world of witches, hobgoblins, and fairies, and given exiſtence to pure nonentities. Finally, it has the ſame power over the ignorant and ſuperſtitious when awake, that it has over all men indiſcriminately when aſleep, and which is beautifully deſcribed by Dryden in the following verſes:

"Dreams are but interludes which fancy makes,
"When monarch reaſon ſleeps, this mimic wakes;
"Compounds a medley of disjointed things,
"A court of Coblers—and a mob of Kings."

His followers having now a leader who was proof againſt poiſon, they would be ſtill farther perſuaded of the truth of his miſſion. Had Mahomet ſtopt here, and obſerved the ſame cunning and privacy in his laſt moments which diſtinguiſhed him through life, his prophetic reputation would have been much augmented. If, inſtead of complaining bitterly to the mother of Baſhar, that he felt the effects of the bit he had eaten at Chaibar then corroding his very vitals, and haſtening his diſſolution, he had given out that his approaching death was the reſult of age and fatigue, bringing on that momentous period which is the common lot of humanity, his whole life would have been one conſiſtent ſcheme of wickedneſs.* Either the perſon who

* It appears indiſputable that Mahomet was believed to have received no injury from the poiſon given him at Chaibar, which tended greatly to inhance his prophetic reputation, yet it is ſaid that he bitterly com-

who intended to poiſon Mahomet on the ſpot, was never known to himſelf, or if known, certainly not made public by him when the event took place; and therefore all that is trumpeted forth about the girl's ſagacity, and her bold vindication of the deed ſhe had done, muſt be aſcribed to the ignorant zeal of his diſciples, who had not recollected the ground they were affording to diſpute, even the ſingle circumſtance of his having been poiſoned at all. If the reader cannot bring himſelf to believe that it was the effect of imagination, I truſt enough has been ſaid to convince him, that it could not have happened in the manner in which it is commonly repreſented.

From

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complained at laſt of its deadly effects. I can ſcarcely credit this account of Abul Feda, becauſe it was to deſtroy that proof of the divinity of his miſſion which Mahomet and his followers intended by it. But if he really did thus expreſs himſelf in the proſpect of diſſolution, it proves that the Almighty has his own way of diſcovering ſuch conſummate wickedneſs, by extorting an awful confeſſion from the mouth of its perpetrator.

From the reduction of Chaibar to his final diſſolution, a period of about three years, frequently feeling (as he thought) from occaſional twitches and pains in his bowels, that he was not ſo invulnerable as he and his followers pretended, he became if poſſible, more bloody and mercileſs than before, while he could ſtand upon his legs, confeſſing that to be the ſole cauſe of his death in the extremity of his torture, which at firſt he wiſhed the world to believe had done him no injury. Before his departure, he nominated Abu Beker his ſucceſſor * to whoſe particular care and protection he recommended his beloved wife Ayeſha. He gave up the ghoſt in the ſixty third year of his age, according to the Arabian computation, or in the ſixty-firſt according to us. His death was matter of aſtoniſhment to many

* Some ſay that one Omar was his ſucceſſor, and firſt Caliph of Mecca, of which opinion is the author of the Turkiſh Spy. See vol. vi.

many of his adherents, who conſidered it as incompatible with the nature and deſign of his miſſion. They concluded, therefore, that he was only aſleep, and would aſſuredly return in the ſpace of a few days. Finding him not at all diſpoſed to return, they gave him a thouſand years to finiſh his journey, which brought it down to 1632. As there was ſtill no appearance of the good prophet's coming back, they gave him a thouſand years more, concluding that he had probably taken ill by the way, or perhaps beſpoke a pair of new boots which would not be got ready in a haſte. But I will venture to predict, that the year 2632 will not hail his arrival, if the day of judgement falls not within that period; for then he will come forth the acknowledged murderer of millions of ſouls!

Abu Beker put a period to the controverſy reſpecting his exit, by proving out of the Coran that the prophet of God behoved to die.

They

They were alſo divided in opinion as to the manner and place of his interment, whether his remains ſhould be conducted to Mecca, and there depoſited with his anceſtors in the place of his nativity. This was likewiſe managed by the influence and addreſs of his uncle, who commanded a grave to be dug in the place where Ayeſha's bed ſtood. Here was Mahomet buried, and over his grave a moſque or place of worſhip was afterwards erected. It is not true that the Arabs were required to pay divine honors to him in the grave, for the pilgrimages of his followers were directed to be made to Mecca, whereas his tomb is at Medina, two hundred and ſeventy miles from it. We muſt alſo reject thoſe ridiculous accounts which have been circulated, probably by chriſtians, of his being ſuſpended between heaven and earth in an iron coffin, by the power of magnets, ſince the Mahometans themſelves, according to the declaration of

Mr

Mr Pitts, of Exeter, never attempt to prove any ſuch thing.*

Thus have I endeavoured to draw the character of Mahomet, and the various methods adopted by him to eſtabliſh his impoſture in the world, from the period at which he aſſumed the title of the prophet of God, to the time of his deceaſe. Luſt and ambition were the two powerful motives by which he was actuated, and he reckoned no ſacrifice too expenſive to accompliſh his aim. We have ſeen the various arts by which he inſinuated himſelf into the good opinion of many, making them converts to his cauſe, and how reſpectable he became in their eſtimation, by the help of his wit, preſence of mind, and conſummate addreſs, before he had recourſe to his laſt expedient of giving mankind his religion at the point of the ſword. For ten years his life exhibited

* See the World Diſplayed, vol. xvii.

exhibited nothing but highway robbery, plunder, and bloodſhed, in which, conſidering the number of his forces, and the extent of the theatre upon which he acted, he exceeded in atrocity even Alexander the Great. To undertake ſuch a taſk as that of the Arabian Impoſtor, required a mind an almoſt utter ſtranger to fear, in addition to thoſe qualities of which we have already found him poſſeſſed, becauſe, to uſe a vulgar mode of expreſſion, it was neck or nothing. A palpable diſcovery of his perfidious deſigns was the forerunner of an ignominious death, and even to be vanquiſhed before the completion of his wiſhes was no leſs hazardous. Yet, in ſpite of every diſcouragement which deliberation would have ſuggeſted as ariſing out of its very eſſence; without a rational argument, or the ſhadow of a miracle to ſupport his impious claim, he has ſubjugated a larger portion of the globe than the heavenly and philanthropic religion of the Lord Jeſus Chriſt has yet enlightened. This is a phenomenon in the hiſtory of moral

revolutions, which will beggar the whole world to produce ſuch another. It is not, however, ſo aſtoniſhing, that this impoſture ſhould have gained a footing in the ſeventh century among ignorant barbarians, to whoſe luſts it promiſed to adminiſter everlaſting fuel, as that the progreſſive improvements of reaſon have not long ſince been its grave. The free exerciſe of reaſon will, I know, be its deſtruction at laſt; but while it continues to be crammed down the throats of mankind, it will not on a ſudden give its dying groan. It is at preſent the religion of India, Perſia, Turkey in Aſia, Turkey in Europe, Arabia, Little Tartary, Little Bokharia, and different other countries. India is two thouſand, three hundred, twenty-two miles long, and two thouſand one hundred broad.

	Long.	*Broad.*
Perſia	1225	900 miles.
Turkey in Aſia	1200	900
Ditto in Europe	540	540
Arabia	1330	1260
Little Tartary	450	155
Ditto Bokharia	1560	570

Ruſſia alone only one empire of Europe, is more than twenty-five times as large as England; yet the religion of Mahomet infects and enſlaves more of the globe than ſix times the whole of Europe taken together! This may ſerve to give ſuch of our readers as are not acquainted with the geography of the earth, ſome idea of its extent.*

That the unbounded gratification of his luſts was one primary object to be gained by his perilous undertaking, is clearly evinced by the multitude of his wives. Such as appear deſirous to leſſen their number, admit that he had no fewer than fifteen, while others (which appears nearer the truth) in-

* That Ruſſia is more than 25 times as large as England, is eaſily proved; for if you multiply its length by its breadth for a dividend, and the length of England by its breadth for a diviſor, you will have 25 of a quotient; beſides a conſiderable remainder.

form us that he had twenty-one. Five of the number died before him, among whom was Cadigha, whoſe fortune enabled him to begin his projected plan; other ſix, it ſeems, he divorced, either from unaccountable caprice, or becauſe of incontinency, and ten of them were living at the time of his deceaſe. Beſides theſe he had many concubines, for nothing ſhort of unlimited admiſſion to the whole ſex could ſatiate his deſires. Nay, thoſe degrees of conſanguinity which reaſon guards from the attacks of a lawleſs paſſion, were trifling in his eſteem, for he thought nothing of cohabiting with the neareſt relations. Ugly and deformed as this picture is, and conſummately wicked as it repreſents him to have been, it were well if we had no authentic documents for making him ſtill worſe. Many men have been guilty of inceſt, with every other unnatural ſpecies of uncleanneſs, who never could diveſt themſelves totally of ſhame, nor baniſh gloomy ideas at particular intervals, as to the more

than

than probable consequences of their criminality. But Mahomet not only gives the reins to his appetites, and breaks down every barrier which nature itself has erected, but lays claim in his Coran to the divine approbation, and represents a holy God as chiding him for his diffidence in being afraid to avow any passion which he had commanded him to gratify. Let us hear no more of the crimes of Francis Spira, Julian the apostate, or Judas Iscariot; of the bloody temper of Nero, or the sullen barbarity of a Caligula or a Domitian; for all these were pious saints or immaculate angels in comparison of Mahomet, and must be ashamed to associate with him even in the regions of the damned.*

* Some people lay claim to such an excessive degree of benevolence, that, in order to represent the Deity as merciful in their opinion, they make him unjust. To such it will perhaps sound harsh to call Mahomet a more wicked wretch than Judas Iscariot, Nero, Caligula

It will not bear diſpute, that his ambition was ungovernable, ſince every action of his life tended, either directly or indirectly, to the acquiſition of ſupreme authority. No man ever hazarded ſo much for the obtaining of fuel to his appetites, and abſolute dominion over his fellow creatures; and he ſhines conſpicuous above the whole human race for unmingled wickedneſs, as to the means he adopted. He has both men and devils fairly out-done; for although ſome may have been almoſt as wicked, yet he is the ſingular individual who could venture to make Almighty God the partner of his crimes, and give currency to all manner of vice by a patent from heaven. Theſe things duly conſidered, we ſhall

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Caligula or Domitian; but the ſingle circumſtance of making Jehovah ſupport his debauchery will juſtify the charge. Even Judas repented, but Mahomet went to the grave, in ſo far as we know, without a pang of remorſe, although he had been the inſtrument of damning myriads.

ſhall not wonder to find many of his followers entering the liſts in his defence, and writing treatiſe after treatiſe to free him from cenſure; for although the Coran is ſufficient to ſatisfy the faithful, yet infidels, you know, will always be finding fault, even with ſuch a ſpotleſs life as that of Mahomet! If you aſk his deluded followers why their prophet could be guilty of ſuch an horrid act of injuſtice (beſides the impiety of it in making God commend his conduct) in marrying ſuch a number of wives, be not afraid that you ſhall go without an anſwer. It was that he might beget a multitude of young prophets, it being a thouſand pities that the genuine breed of ſuch a man ſhould ever become extinct! But, O! what an unlucky reply, when it is well known that not a woman in his whole ſeraglio had a child to him but Cadigha his firſt wife! She bare him ſix, and they all died before him except Fatina his daughter, who was married to his couſin Ali; and it

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does not appear that ſhe was any way remarkable for a prophetic ſpirit, although ſhe might perhaps have a conſiderable ſhare of that neceſſary appendage to female perfection—*a tongue!**

Setting aſide altogether the impiety of calling God in to juſtify ſuch conduct, there are very few men to be found who will attempt a vindication of polygamy, even upon rational principles. The primary deſign of marriage, with all the duties conſequent on the union of the ſexes, plead for monogamy in the ſtrongeſt terms, which is farther ſtrengthened

* I humbly beg every lady's pardon for what is here aſſerted, if the naked truth ſtands in need of an apology. It has often been obſerved that they are no way remarkable for taciturnity, inſomuch that a wag once undertook to prove that no women will be ſaved, from a ſingle paſſage in the book of the Revelation—there was ſilence in heaven for the ſpace of half an hour!!

ſtrengthened by the almoſt perfect equality in the number of males and females up and down the earth. The proportion, taken in many places with the greateſt accuracy, is as 13 to 12, or 26 to 24. The God of nature ſeems wiſely to have intended this ſurplus in the number of males, to provide for thoſe accidents and dangers to which their more active and enterpriſing life expoſes them. The man, therefore, who is guilty of polygamy, nay, even of bigamy itſelf, commits as glaring an act of injuſtice againſt the whole human race, as if he ſpent his lifetime in acts of robbery and theft. It is of conſequence impoſſible to vindicate the conduct of Mahomet in this reſpect, even admitting that his polygamy had not been rendered more ſhocking by his own dreadful blaſphemy; and to crown all, the ſuppoſed object of ſuch deportment never was obtained. I ſay the ſuppoſed object, for notwithſtanding his adherents endeavour to extenuate his guilt on the forementioned grounds, it does not appear that

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the Impoſtor looked any farther than the glutting of his appetites. Young prophets or no prophets he conſidered as of little conſequence; and indeed his voluptuous courſe of life was inimical to procreation.*

His votaries have likewiſe been much perplexed how to defend his conduct in propagating his religion by the ſword. To gain the aſſent of mankind to the truth of any propoſition, it is neceſſary that it be ſupported by convincing arguments, ſince the human mind has it not in its power to believe without evidence, no more than it can reject what is matter of fact and demonſtrated to be ſo, whatever it may pretend. Hence every ſpecies of perſecution for conſcience ſake is the moſt flagrant in-

* It ſeems he durſt not venture to bring any more wives upon Cadigha, ſince an act of ſuch injuſtice would not have been endured by the author of all his greatneſs. Hence he was prolific in a ſtate of monogamy, but never after.

injuſtice, the higheſt inſult which can be offered to the Almighty, and a tacit acknowledgement that the cauſe thus ſupported will not bear examination. For if it will, why are not men permitted to examine it with the utmoſt attention, ſince the native beauty of truth is ſuch, that to ſee and admire it are inſeparably connected. Jeſus Chriſt was ſo diametrically oppoſite to Mahomet in this, as well as in every thing elſe, that he ſeemed afraid leſt mankind ſhould believe him with too much precipitation. If I do not the works of my father, believe me not. That is, if raiſing the dead, giving ſight to ſuch as were born blind, and feeding thouſands with the food of a few individuals, do not demonſtrate the power of Jehovah, and exclude the poſſibility of fraud and deception, I beſeech you to turn your backs upon me, as in duty bound, and reject me as an Impoſtor. But as Mahomet had nothing to offer which would bear inſpection, he conſidered it as the

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moſt effectual method to make an appeal to the heart;—and ſurely nothing can touch the heart ſo feelingly as the point of a ſword!

The learned amongſt his followers (for learned men are not always proof againſt deluſion) have undertaken a defence of him in a very ſingular manner. They obſerve that, as there are a variety of attributes in the divine eſſence, God has ſent different perſonages in different periods of the world, to manifeſt, ſometimes one attribute, and ſometimes another. Accordingly they ſay that Jeſus Chriſt was ſent to manifeſt the righteouſneſs of God; Solomon to exhibit his wiſdom, glory and majeſty; Moſes his wonderful providence and amazing clemency; but that it was reſerved for Mahomet to ſhew forth his fortitude by the power of the ſword. That is to ſay, God appointed him to unman the human race, to reduce them from rational beings to neceſſary agents, to render them no longer accountable to their maker, and com-

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pel them to do evil. The divine attributes are no doubt many and various, but it is utterly impoſſible that any one of them can ever be magnified at the expence of the reſt. God is eſſentially conſiſtent with himſelf, and the manifeſtation of one attribute can never be the deſtruction of another. He who ſays that Jehovah is ſo merciful as not to puniſh the workers of iniquity, exhibits him as unjuſt; and to affirm that he is ſo juſt as not to pardon the ſincere penitent, on his own terms, is to charge him with tyranny. In like manner to aſſert that God will ever force a man to believe any thing by external violence, is in effect maintaining that he is ſorry he has given him ſuch faculties, by which alone he is capable of diſcriminating between the operations of his own hands and the ſhifts of a deceiver. This hint of forcing men to believe has been borrowed from Mahomet by the church of Rome, and to do her juſtice, ſhe has faithfully improved it. It may be

proper to obſerve, for the information of thoſe who are not qualified for abſtruſe ſpeculations, that the criminality of compelling men to believe, does not entirely depend on the falſity or wickedneſs of the propoſition to which their aſſent is demanded. It is cruel and unjuſt to ſay to any perſon, you ſhall believe that it is proper to worſhip the devil, or that his ghoſtly holineſs can pardon iniquity. But it is equally baſe and tyrannical to force a man to believe with a dagger at his breaſt, that the providence of God extends over all; that the ſoul is immortal, or that the three angles of any triangle whatever, are equal to two right angles, or 180° ; for till the underſtanding is enlightened, and the conſcience perſuaded of the propriety of a man's conduct, his reception of truth itſelf is, under ſuch circumſtances, morally evil as it relates to him, although it be not ſo in the abſtract. If then it be unjuſt to compel a man to believe truth, ſince he thereby for the preſent flies in the face of conſcience, it muſt be infinitely more ſo to

force

force him to believe a lie, especially if that lie assumes the venerable garb of religion. Let it not be imagined, however, that this will justify any man in remaining ignorant of such truths as nearly concern his present and future happiness, when he enjoys the rational means of being better informed; for God will only consider that ignorance as innocent which is clearly invincible. Neither will the above reasoning justify the inference, that it is cruel in any protestant government to impose certain restraints; for example, on Roman Catholics,* because such a step is not designed to make them believe any thing, but only to prevent that moral, and especially

* I use this expression merely in compliance with custom, while I am fully convinced of its absurdity. Catholic is compounded of two Greek words that signify universal; and therefore the Roman Catholic Church is the same thing as to say, the particular universal church, which is a manifest contradiction.

that political miſchief which would unavoidably follow from their uncontrouled acting upon the principles they believe already.

I truſt we have all heard enough of the bloody temper of Roman Catholics, to make us tremble at the thought of their acquiring too much influence. It is not with a member of that church as with any other man of of a ſanguinary diſpoſition. The one may bitterly repent of murder, even before it is recogniſed by public juſtice, but the other can feel no compunction for any ſuch crime, being taught to believe that it is not only innocent, but highly meritorious, to butcher a proteſtant. Good God! will even the ſtupendous talents of a Mr F—x himſelf be able to convince the world, that it is either iniquitous or impolitic in a proteſtant government to ſtudy ſelf-preſervation, and prevent a people from obtaining a dangerous importance, who believe as firmly as they do the word

word of God, and perhaps more ſo, that abſolute dominion is founded in grace, and that no faith is to be kept with heretics on pain of eternal damnation? It is abſurd to tell us that they have renounced theſe opinions, for this is taking the very thing for granted which I inſiſt ſhould be proved. Such a man as Mr F—x may have their own word for it, but the reader will excuſe me if I doubt the ſecurity. Did the hopeful daughter of Henry VIII. prove ſhe had renounced them? Did the Iriſh maſſacre ſhew it, or the terrific revocation of the edict of Nantz? What evidence can thoſe gentlemen produce, that ſuch tenets are yet renounced, who lately ſet up ſuch a hue and cry in parliament about Catholic emancipation? I will tell you. Becauſe a merciful God prevented Charles Stuart from obtaining the throne of Britain in the year 1745, it is therefore inferred that they will not do what they could not accompliſh!! But perhaps it will be ſaid, that the reſtraints impoſed upon Roman Catholics

amount to perſecution. That they amount to ſlavery, ſeems to have been the idea of their advocates in the upper and lower houſes, for upon no other ſuppoſition can the term *emancipation* have any meaning. But to keep men from doing miſchief is neither ſlavery nor perſecution, and the man who can aſſert that it is, ought not to be argued with. To reaſon with him would be an abſolute waſte of time. God forbid that proteſtants ſhould ever perſecute, and thereby make a formal renunciation of the ſpirit of chriſtianity; but I truſt they will ever diſcover the vigilance for which they have hitherto been ſo famous, in guarding their native land from the worſt of all tyranny. It has been ſaid that there are many Roman Catholics who are ſhocked at the recital of thoſe bloody deeds which have diſgraced the annals of that church. If there are ſuch men, and if they really are ſincere in their expreſſions of abhorrence, the moſt that can be ſaid of

of them is, that they are ſuperior to their own principles, and pray what does this prove? Why, that they ſtill continue members of a religious community which their own reaſon condemns and reprobates.

It being agreed on all hands that Mahomet was extremely ignorant, in ſo far as that expreſſion is oppoſed to education, could he accompliſh his deſigns without any aſſiſtance? This is an important enquiry, becauſe he could neither read nor write, the common fate of every perſon in Mecca, except a ſingle individual who was a relation of Cadigha's, and who had been both a chriſtian and a jew. He was likewiſe brought up to a reverence for idolatry, and unacquainted with the principles of judaiſm and chriſtianity, both of which his Coran plainly ſhews that its authors certainly underſtood. How he acquired this knowledge deſerves ſome conſideration. He travelled, it is true, into Syria, Perſia, and Egypt, while factor or agent for her who became

came his firſt wife, in all which countries he would find many diſciples both of Moſes and of Chriſt; but ſuch a minute enquiry into their principles, if made in public, while he diſcovered no inclination to become a convert to either, would have excited general curioſity to find out his reaſon, and this again would have left no uncertainty as to the ſource of his information. A man ignorant of both muſt have required conſiderable time and attention to become ſo well verſed in their tenets, as the author of the Coran muſt be allowed to have been. I ſhould ſuppoſe that all the knowledge he could acquire in the courſe of travelling would be very trifling, as it would come accidentally in his way; for a man whoſe ſucceſs depended on privacy would not be very inquiſitive. Beſides, when men are engaged in traffic, and have their ideas ingroſſed with the diſpoſal of their commodities, they are not in a humour to talk much about religion. Yet no man can read the

the Coran without being aſſured that he did receive aſſiſtance from ſome quarter, but there are two circumſtances which increaſe our difficulty in coming at the truth. Chriſtians who were filled with indignation at the wickedneſs of Mahomet, might perhaps be diſpoſed to exaggerate in this, as well as in ſome other things relating to the Impoſtor; and his followers being determined to ſupport the divinity of its origin, would not make any circumſtance public which could injure this opinion, if able to keep it a ſecret, however well acquainted they might be with the truth. Taking therefore the teſtimony of thoſe authors who can be leaſt ſuſpected of having any ſuch deſpicable end to ſerve as the indulging a ſpirit of malevolence, we may reſt aſſured of this truth, that Mahomet was aided in the compoſition of his Coran by a jew and a chriſtian. The jew's name was Abdia Ben Salon, whom the Impoſtor called Abdollah, according to the Arabian method of terminating hebrew words. The name of the chriſ-

tian

tian monk was Sergius or Bahira, the firſt given to him by the weſtern, and the ſecond by the eaſtern churches. That the man is one and the ſame, appears from the uniformity of the deſcriptions given of him; and the reaſon why he is called Sergius in the weſt, and Bahira in the eaſt, may have been owing to a change of opinions, and ſubſequent change of name, the weſtern churches continuing to call him Sergius from their ignorance of the change, and the ſame cauſe inducing the eaſtern churches to call him always Bahira.*

All

* This is far from being a ſingular circumſtance in any country, or in any language, and therefore it need create no ſurpriſe. For inſtance, the ſame perſon is called Zophar in Job, who is ſtiled duke Zepho in the book of Geneſis. Eliſha is called Eliſeus, Noah is named Noe in the new Teſtament, Elijah is termed Elias, and ſo of many others. While the life and tranſactions of a man are always deſcribed alike, though under different epithets, a mere change of name will create

All I find related of Abdia or Abdollah worthy of notice is, that he was a man of amazing artifice and cunning, probably a native of Perſia, and ſo abſolute a ſtranger to remorſe of conſcience on the commiſſion of evil, that he was a match for any thing, however deſperately wicked. He was a man of profound erudition, ſkilled in all the abſtruſe learning of the ſeed of Abraham, and even promoted to the literary dignity of a Rabbi. A reſpectable author called Johannes Andreas, who, from being a mahometan turned chriſtian, avers that Abdollah wrote all Mahomet's pretended revelations for the ſpace of ten years. This inſtantly lets the cat out of the bag, for however much his employer might inſiſt that he was only his amanuenſis, we who

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create no obſcurity. Were a perſon to deſcribe the nature, properties, and local ſituation of the Boſphorus Thracius, no man would be at a loſs to know that he meant the ſtraights of the Dardanels.

who have an opportunity of inveſtigating the matter with calmneſs and attention, muſt beg leave to diſpute his veracity. A regard to truth was none of Mahomet's failings, and therefore all he could ſay upon the ſubject will not free him from the imputation of having this fellow for an accomplice. Being as little diſpoſed to boggle at immorality as he could poſſibly be himſelf, he could not have found a perſon in the world better qualified for his purpoſe. But as Bahira could juſt as eaſily have betrayed Mahomet as he had deſerted his former principles, the Impoſtor, who no doubt perceived this, ſent him quietly to the other world when he had no farther uſe for him. Two may perhaps keep a ſecret, however wicked, but it is extremely dangerous to truſt any more. Iniquitous deſigns have ſuch a native tendency to beget a ſpirit of jealouſy, even in the projectors, and to excite a competition for fame or emolument, that they perpetually cheriſh the ſeeds

of

of their own deſtruction. Without honeſty a community of thieves cannot long exiſt, and without a degree of confidence in an accomplice which it is almoſt impoſſible to call forth, an Impoſtor is in perpetual danger to have thoſe for his greateſt enemies who are privy to his ſcheme. If they are chiefly concerned in its fabrication, and in giving it ſome ſhadow of conſiſtency and plauſibility, the leaſt air of ſuperiority on his part may ſhake it to its very baſis, and neglecting to reward them in ſuch an ample manner as they expect, may lay it in ruins. Of all theſe circumſtances Mahomet ſeems to have been perfectly aware, and therefore he deemed it the ſafeſt and moſt prudent method to diſpatch Bahira, ſince this would render it impoſſible for him to tell any tidings. It would be abſurd to expect a particular account of this murder in any hiſtorian, but the inquiſitive mind can diſcover ſufficient premiſes from which to infer this concluſion. If it was ever known to

any that Mahomet was the perſonal perpetrator of the deed, it would naturally be aſcribed to any cauſe rather than the juſt one. But from the obſervations already made, the true reaſon can hardly be controverted by a reflecting mind. And while the horrid wickedneſs of Bahira muſt be execrated by every pious ſoul, this diminiſhes not the guilt of Mahomet in imbrewing his hands in his blood. They were both monſters, but the employer of the monk was infinitely the greater villain, ſince he added murder to deluſion, united a wiſh to deceive the world with a breach of truſt, and baſely violated the confidence which he had induced Bahira to repoſe in him. Indeed we deem the receiver of ſtolen goods as bad at leaſt as the thief, and therefore the countenancer of a ſcheme ſo wicked in its nature, and ſo dangerous in its tendency, met, in a premature death, the fate he deſerved.

As I wish to omit nothing of importance which can either exhibit the folly and superstition of the Mahometans, or the extreme wickedness of their prophet, disdaining at the same time to father any thing upon him for which I can discover no authentic documents; it will be proper to present the reader in this place with the ridiculous stories concerning this monk, which are firmly believed by the disciples of the Impostor. We are told that Bahira meeting Mahomet in a city called Bostra, on the confines of Syria, instantly knew him to be the great prophet that was to come into the world, to make a clearer revelation of the will of God to men. The mark by which he recognised him, was a light shining from his face, and which at the creation of the world was stamped upon Adam. The unity of this luminous appearance was preserved from the days of Adam to the time of Abraham, when it was converted into two, one resting upon Isaac, and

the other on Iſhmael. The light of Iſaac, they obſerve, was ſoon manifeſted in the many prophets who deſcended from him, but the light of Iſhmael was veiled till the time of Mahomet, in whom it ſhone forth with ſuch brilliancy, that Bahira knew him in a moment! This is a clumſy, ill-made alluſion to the ſhining of Moſes' face when he came down from the mount, which rendered it extremely difficult for the Iſraelites to look upon him. They all ſaw the light, which muſt always be perceived by perſons who have the uſe of their eyes; but the light on Mahomet's face could only touch the optics of Bahira. Every body elſe in the public market muſt have been blind, while the apoſtate monk was as quick-ſighted as a cat. It is ſaid by others, that he knew Mahomet by the ſeal of his prophetic miſſion ſtamped between his ſhoulders. It is a pity they have not condeſcended to tell us whether this mark was on the bare buff, or on his outer doublet. If on his upper garment, hundreds muſt

muſt have ſeen it as well as Bahira, and if he inſtantly ſtript to the ſkin to make the wonderful diſcovery, how came it to paſs that all this hurry and buſtle eſcaped the obſervation of the multitude? If it is pretended that he took him aſide to examine it privately, how came he to know that ſuch a mark was there? It is manifeſt that he would not, that he could not have taken ſuch a ſtep without ſome previous conviction or ſuſpicion of its exiſtence; but how he acquired this, is the queſtion. It is extremely curious that he ſhould know him by a certain mark, which he did not know was there prior to an examination. Had he known it by a ſupernatural impulſe, he would have told the public that this was the prophet of God, the meſſenger of the great Alla, and that there was a particular mark between his ſhoulders which they might examine if they pleaſed. Nothing of this, however, was attempted, for it ſeems it was enough that Bahira knew ſuch a mark

to be there, and what it ſignified, without permitting the people to act the abſurd part of judging for themſelves. Thoſe who would not wiſh to have their conduct touched by the dirty hand of inſpection, ſhould prevent mankind, if poſſible, from the horrid crime of thinking. This was the prudent, cautious conduct of Mahomet and Bahira; but the paſſive obedience of the multitude in giving credit to the exiſtence of a light which they did not ſee, and of a mark they were never required to examine, remains to be accounted for, and perhaps always will. Truth is always conſiſtent with itſelf, but falſehood is ſo disjointed and incoherent in all its parts, that eagle-eyed inveſtigation muſt diſcover its cloven foot.

The deluded votaries of Mahomet being determined to reject every idea of his having received aſſiſtance in the compoſition of his Coran, convert his very ignorance into an argu-

argument for its divinity. They allow him to have been deſtitute of the firſt principles of any art or ſcience, challenging the world to produce ſuch a work under ſimilar circumſtances. It is as capable of demonſtration as any problem of Euclid, that he had it not from God, becauſe his deſign in fabricating his impoſture, and the means he employed to inſure its ſucceſs in the world, are abſolutely repugnant to every notion of the Almighty, which the loweſt and moſt degraded ſtate of the human underſtanding can poſſibly form. It ſucceeded by humouring the darling paſſions of corrupt nature, and durſt never make an appeal to the common ſenſe of mankind. Thus much will be granted, that the Coran, after deducting the blaſphemy, abſurdity, and contradiction with which it abounds, is the very ſtandard of elegance in the original, diſcovering beauties as a compoſition in the Arabic tongue which no ignorant man could ever have exhibited. But this can be

no argument in favor of its divine origin while it carries in its boſom the inſignia of the devil, and contains as much obſcenity and profligacy as R————r's poems.* It is nothing in its favor that it ſets out with ſupporting the unity of the divine nature, and ſo repeatedly aſſerts that God is one. This only betrays the cloven foot of Abdollah his jewiſh confederate, who, in ſpite of all his rabbinical ingenuity, artifice, and caution, could not wholly conceal the faith which he formerly profeſſed, not only in one, but in many places

* Were it even poſſible to obtain a miraculous power in order to vindicate a lie, that power would not make a rational being credit any doctrine or precept which diſhonors God. For inſtance, a miracle could not make me believe that the Almighty is the author of ſin, much leſs will the language of the Coran, however elegant, ſupport its divinity, while every ſentence of it almoſt is an open inſult to the Majeſty of heaven and earth.

places of the Arabian bible. But the truth is, he did not wiſh to conceal it, ſince a part of it at leaſt was to compoſe part of the Coran, no doubt with Mahomet's conſent and approbation, after he came to underſtand it. Whenever any mention is made of rites and ceremonies, whether to be eſpouſed or rejected, the myſterious jargon of the Talmud diſcovers to the diſcerning mind who was his principal coadjutor. Without the aid of ſome who better underſtood the Supreme Being than an egregiouſly ignorant man, born and brought up in an idolatrous country, the Coran could not have had even the deſpicable merit of mingling this doctrine with ſo much wickedneſs. It is a ſyſtematical vindication of robbery, debauchery, and murder, not only ſanctioned by the life of its author, but blaſphemouſly ſupported by the authority of God himſelf, which the Impoſtor ſays he received from the angel Gabriel.

I do

I do not ſuppoſe that it was material to Mahomet what he taught, provided his countrymen could be brought to believe its divine origin, whether from God or from the gods; the legality of the means by which he propoſed to enforce its obſervance, and the undoubted equity of his claim to ſupreme dominion, both in things ſecular and religious. True, indeed, he had much oppoſition to expect from jews and chriſtians in the infancy of his ſcheme, of which we have already taken notice, and therefore it was a piece of conſummate policy, for which he was certainly indebted to the plotting head of Abdollah, to admit into his ſyſtem ſome peculiar, leading doctrine which both parties believed. I cannot allow that Arabian divinity taught men ſuch ideas of God as a jew could communicate, and which, it muſt be confeſſed, abound in the Coran, notwithſtanding the wickedneſs it makes the Almighty to countenance. Idolatry is incompatible with

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ſuch ideas, for when worſhip is divided among a thouſand deities, the mind can have no ſuch exalted conceptions of any individual. This was the caſe with the Greeks and Romans, concerning whoſe theology I believe I differ from the whole learned world. Under the fictitious character of Jupiter the greateſt authors would have us to perceive Almighty God, the independent ruler of the univerſe; but as Jupiter was a thief, a whoremonger, and adulterer; a ſcandal even to mankind, and as he died and was buried, I ſhould as ſoon credit the Coran as adopt ſuch a ſentiment.* Mahomet, then, by giving the

* All the world was ignorant of the true God before the promulgation of chriſtianity, except the Jews, although every nation had a God of its own, whether of braſs, timber, or fleſh. It is ſaid, the learned among the Greeks and Romans knew better, but durſt not ſpeak plainly for fear of the people. This is a pitiful ſhift, and a palpable falſehood, for it is always the people who are afraid of the great. How often have the

the unity of God a place in his bible, took off a conſiderable part of that horror at his religion, which muſt otherwiſe have been felt by chriſtians and jews. It was thus the eaſier for him to make proſelytes of people ſo torn to pieces by diſſention as the eaſtern churches of the chriſtians then were, many of whoſe members chimed in with his deluſions; and his own countrymen being without any religion properly ſo called, were the more likely to eſpouſe opinions which offered no violence to their paſſions. It was alſo a grand manœuvre for making converts of the jews, who could by no means ſtomach the doctrine of the trinity. If any ſyſtem ſo completely wicked could bid fair to ſuit the palates of every deſcription of men at the period when, and in the country where the ſcene

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the multitude juſt notions of civil liberty, while they dare not avow them for fear of their rulers? The learned Cicero declares his ignorance of this ſubject by the title of his book, De natura Deorum.

ſcene was laid, that of Mahomet was undoubtedly the ſyſtem. Yet we have ſeen that the firſt thirteen years of his pretended miſſion were ſpent to little purpoſe, conſidering how he laboured, and the arts he employed, for it could not bear the touchſtone of reaſon and argument. This made him finally reſolve to adopt the method already taken notice of, and which he ſo faithfully uſed for the laſt ten years of his life—to give ſpeedy and extenſive circulation to his opinions by the invincible logic of the ſword. Nay, it is ſtill cuſtomary with Mahometan preachers to deliver their diſcourſes to the people with a ſword by their ſide, not only as expreſſive of the ſublime manner in which that religion was firſt propagated, but as evincing alſo what every man has to expect, if he ventures to diſpute its divinity, or recede from its defence. This accounts for its extenſive ſpread and the long duration of its exiſtence, ſince no man dares venture to renounce it, without the certain proſpect of

making his eſcape to ſome land of liberty, or of meeting death in its moſt dreadful forms. If the epiſtolary correſpondence of Mahmut the Turkiſh Spy be not a forgery (a circumſtance about which I am extremely dubious*) it proves the ſubjects of the Ottoman empire to

* It is ſaid of him that he continued at Paris no leſs than forty-five years undiſcovered, a circumſtance ſo very improbable, nay, almoſt impoſſible, that I am abſolutely at a loſs what to conjecture. The Turkiſh Spy contains ſo many ſarcaſms and blundering reflections on the chriſtian religion, that I am diſpoſed to conſider it as the production of ſome deiſt about the time of Voltaire. Although it is a ſtrange medley of knowledge and ignorance, deep reflection and want of thought, commendable piety and horrid profaneneſs, it diſcovers an intimate acquaintance with the manners, cuſtoms, religion, and even the very modes of expreſſion employed by the Ottomans, Arabs, and other believers in the miſſion of Mahomet, things, however, not impoſſible to be acquired by a ſtudious European.

to be very intelligent, poſſeſſed of an acuteneſs of thinking, which error can ſeldom elude, and therefore compulſion and terror are alone capable of ſupporting the deluſion.

I give it as my humble opinion, that nothing but the conqueſt of Mahometan countries, by which the ſentiments of men may be freed from their fetters, will ever be the deſtruction of that ſyſtem of blaſphemy and iniquity by which they are at preſent enſlaved. Hence an invaſion of thoſe countries would be a merciful interference, if conducted with humanity, becauſe it does not appear probable that a mental revolution will ever be ſo powerful or extenſive, as to cope with the terrific influence of Grand Seignors, Sultans, Baſhaws, and Muftis. Far be it from me, however, to inſinuate, that the victors ought to perſecute the vanquiſhed, and force them to relinquiſh their wonted opinions, for this would be to com-

mit the horrid crime of Mahomet himſelf, by which alone his religion could have been preſerved for twenty years from the grave of oblivion. There is not another lawful method of dealing with men's conſciences beſides the formidable attacks of reaſon and argument. Nor would any thing ſhort of abſolute neceſſity juſtify an invaſion of Mahometan countries, even for the laudable purpoſe of diffuſing knowledge, for an attempt to ſend miſſionaries to perſuade them of the wickedneſs and deluſion of their prophet, would be conducting them to a ſlaughter-houſe. Although a ſavage of Otaheite will liſten to reaſon and argument, you are not to look for this from a Muſſulman, while he has the power in his hand of putting you to death.*

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* I know of none in the univerſe, however much degraded beneath the rank of men, thoſe only except-

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Mahomet, whoſe time-ſerving diſpoſition made him readily humour every whim, caprice, or ſuperſtitious attachment of his countrymen, if calculated to accelerate the accompliſhment of his deſigns, changed his firſt reſolution of making his diſciples turn towards Jeruſalem in performing their mummery worſhip, and gratified their wiſhes to give Mecca the honor. At this place there was a temple long before the time of Mahomet, conſecrated to idolatry, and converted by him to purpoſes not leſs wicked and impious. It is ſaid by the Arabians, that it was originally built in the celeſtial regions, ſacred to the devotional exerciſes of angelic

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ed who ſupport their opinions by carnal weapons, who will not liſten to argument, and be won by the force of reaſon. Hence arrives the impoſſibility of enlightening the Mahometan world in any other way than in that above ſpecified.

ſpirits. According to them, paradiſe was ſituated in heaven, and that Adam alſo worſhipped in this temple before his fall. Even in his lapſed condition, it ſeems he retained a very high veneration for it, and therefore humbly intreated the Almighty to let him have one like it upon earth. In compliance with his importunity, the Supreme Being ſent him down one in a curtain of light, which fell in the beloved city of Mecca, the place of the prophet's nativity. But the third ſon of Adam called Seth, wiſhing to have a building ſomething more ſubſtantial, erected one upon the ſpot, compoſed of ſtones and clay, retaining however the exact model of the viſionary fabric.

It is deeply affecting to a philanthropic heart, to conſider how many millions of rational beings are degraded to the rank of brutes by the conſummate artifice and wickedneſs of a ſingle individual. They go about

about their religious farrago as if they worſhipped God in the beſt poſſible manner, reſulting from a well-informed judgement, and an explicit, indubitable revelation of his mind and will. Superſtitious to a moſt extravagant height, they are often employed in ſobbing and ſighing, intreating Alla to forgive their iniquities, and all on a ſudden they are as merry as pipers, feaſting and revelling like an aſſembly of Bacchanalians. Every year they retire to a hill, called in their language, *Gibbel el orphat*, or the mountain of knowledge, two months and nine days after the faſt of Ramadan, to receive from the Iman or prieſt, the ſuppoſed honorable title of Hadgee. On their way to Mecca from this mountain, each gathers forty-nine ſmall ſtones, which they throw by ſevens at a time at three pillars in the vicinity of the mountain, calling out, ſtone the devil and them that pleaſe him.

Within

Within the temple of Mecca, ſaid to be about ten times as large in circumference as the Royal Exchange of London, ſtands a ſolid ſquare edifice called the Beat Allah, to which the Arabs pay ſuch an enthuſiaſtic regard, that they deem it unſpeakable happineſs to be ſoaked with the rain which comes from the root of it. The temple is without any ornaments or images, as they abhor idolatry, at leaſt in profeſſion; it is deſtitute of pews or ſeats, and the floor is covered with mats. They believe that the patriarch Abraham (or Ibrahim) built the Beat at the divine command, and his own ſepulchre, according to them, is but a few paces from it. The city of Mecca is but a mean place, without any walls as a defence, and the houſes are deſpicable. It is ſituated in one of the moſt barren ſpots of Arabia, about a day's journey from the Red Sea.

Having

Having formerly mentioned the journey of Mahomet to heaven, and commented upon it as I think it deſerved, it may here be neceſſary to aſſign his reaſon for the fabrication of ſuch an abſurd ſtory. He found that many of his aſſertions were deemed ridiculous, and that it would be an endleſs taſk to compoſe a chapter for the confirmation of every thing he might have occaſion to advance. He therefore tried how his trip to heaven would take with the multitude, to the belief of which he found means to gain their aſſent, by bringing in Almighty God to vouch for its truth. To have invented this ſtory ſooner than he did, would have ſpoiled all, but after it was believed that he was divinely inſpired, it was eaſy to give it currency by the compoſition of a chapter. This made oral tradition as much reſpected among the Arabs as it was among the Jews, who often raiſed it to a level with the ſcriptures, and thus Mahomet gained the object which he

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certainly had in view. The volumes of tradition, made up of his ſayings and remarks, are called the Sonnah.*

As Mahomet always admitted the inſpiration of the Old and New Teſtament, or the divine miſſion of Moſes and Jeſus Chriſt, he thereby ſtole inſenſibly on the affections of Jews

* His beloved Ayeſha, who lived forty eight years after the Impoſtor's deceaſe, was conſidered as an oracle, retaining many of his incidental expreſſions which compoſe the Sonnah. It is remarkable that one Abdorrahman is ſaid to have kept in his memory no leſs than 5340 traditions, and which, upon the ſlimſy authority of his recollection, are deemed binding on all Muſſulmans. This Abdorrahman was a great favorite with the deceiver, whom he called Abu Hareira, or the father of a cat, it being cuſtomary with Mahomet to give names to people, expreſſive of ſome qualities which they were ſuppoſed to poſſeſs, or of ſome peculiar object to which they were attached.

Jews and Chriſtians. To have conſidered them as Impoſtors, and publicly to have avowed that theſe were his ſentiments, might have procured him their warmeſt oppoſition; but to inſinuate that God only deſigned his miſſion to be more effectual than theirs, and finally to accompliſh what they had not brought about, was a maſterly ſnare which they could not well avoid. To combat the preconceived opinions of mankind with ſucceſs can only be done by a real meſſenger from heaven, while artful villainy may delude the moſt penetrating by granting all they deſire. But I conceive that this acknowledgement of Mahomet pointed ſtill farther, and was deſigned to eſtabliſh the belief of a propoſition more intereſting to him—that theſe very ſcriptures predicted his coming as a prophet from on high. If the Impoſtor himſelf pretended that he was the ſubject of prophecy, the idea muſt have been ſuggeſted to him by the united cunning of Abdollah and Bahira, although I do not find

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it very explicitly laid to his charge; but it has not wanted advocates among his ableſt adherents. We are aſſured that God cannot predict the coming of a deceiver as a prophet ſent by him, conſiſtently with the honor of his glorious attributes, which he muſt ever defend, becauſe he would thereby confound the diſtinction between good and evil, and render it impoſſible for his rational creatures to diſcriminate between truth and falſehood. While I am acquainted with the character and doctrines of Mahomet, it would be impoſſible for me to believe a revelation as coming from heaven, ſhould it contain the moſt diſtant hint that he was a prophet of God. Such an idea would deſtroy every mark of divine originality, except I could demonſtrate that it was a wicked interpolation. But as both the Old and New Teſtament have been quoted in proof of the juſtice of his claim, it will not be deemed impertinent to examine ſuch quotations.

When

When Moſes was about to bleſs the children of Iſrael a little before his death, he thus ſpoke, Deut. xxxiii. 2. "The Lord came from Sinai, and roſe up from Seir unto them; he ſhined forth from mount Paran, and he came with ten thouſands of ſaints: from his right hand went a fiery law for them." It is no doubt an unqueſtionable fact, that the Lord's coming from Sinai is deſcriptive of the giving of the Law to the children of Iſrael, when in terrific majeſty he deſcended to its burning top, and when the mountain, enveloped with ſmoke, ſeemed a magazine of fire. It may alſo be allowed that Seir is a mountain in the vicinity of ancient Salem, and thus Moſes and Chriſt may be repreſented. But when the advocates for the miſſion of Mahomet indulge in their ſophiſtry, and wiſh to conſider Mecca as the place intended by Paran, they either ſhew their ignorance of its geographical ſituation, or expect that it is a very eaſy matter to impoſe upon mankind.

Paran being ſituated on the confines of Paleſtine, in Arabia Petraea, no leſs than five hundred miles from Mecca, the undoubted birth-place of the Impoſtor, makes it a very unlucky circumſtance for the credit of his religion. As well might we prove that Euclid was buried in Ireland, from the firſt chapter of Geneſis, as that Mahomet who was born at Mecca, drew his firſt breath in Paran. But the abettors of a deſperate cauſe are often obliged to hazard a deſperate proof of its goodneſs.

In Pſalm l. 2. it is thus written: "Out of Zion, the perfection of beauty, God hath ſhined." In one particular verſion of the book of pſalms it runs thus: "Out of Zion God hath ſhewed a glorious crown;" which laſt words are by ſome tranſlators turned into Arabic by *eclilan mahmudan*, an honorable crown, and laſt of all by a moſt wonderful metempſechoſis it is made the crown of Mahomet! When, or how God ſhewed the crown

crown of the Impoſtor out of Zion, is a nice ſpeculation, except with the touch of a magician's wand we could convert Zion into Mecca, which, by the way, would be no more difficult or impracticable, than to change Mecca into Paran.

In the book of the prophet Iſaiah, chapter xxi. ver. 7. we find the following declaration: "He ſaw a chariot with a couple of horſemen, a chariot of aſſes, and a chariot of camels." In ſome old verſions it is, a rider upon an aſs, and a rider upon a camel. From the manner of Chriſt's triumphant entrance into Jeruſalem, Arabic writers conceive him to be intended by the rider on an aſs, and as their countrymen uſe camels for beaſts of burden, to be ſure Mahomet is the champion which here rode upon a camel! According to this mode of interpreting ſcripture, there is no abſurdity which it may not be made to prove. You have only to change the primary ſignification into

a ſecond diametrically oppoſite, this ſecond into a third, and ſo on through a thouſand ſtages, if need be, till you bring it to the meaning required. Thus, you may prove that the angles at the baſe of an Iſoſceles triangle are equal to each other, by the muſic of the ſpheres, or the eternity of the world from the nature of cauſe and effect!!

Once more, our Saviour informs his diſciples in his valedictory diſcourſe: "If I go not away, the comforter will not come unto you;" John xvi. 7. The deluded votaries of Mahomet wiſhing to make the world believe that their beloved prophet is here intended, have taken care to call him Paraclet, which is derived from a greek word ſignifying the comforter, a moſt eaſy and expeditious method of applying the whole bible to him. So it ſeems Jeſus ſaid, that if he did not go away, the holy, the juſt, the merciful, and benevolent Mahomet would not make his

his appearance, to have his chaſte ears grated by the filthy converſation of the wicked, which would have been a loſs to mankind not eaſily made up. Although it is almoſt impoſſible to abſtain from the indulgence of irony upon ſuch a ſubject, yet as ſome may deem it inconſiſtent with the dignified gravity of hiſtorical diction, we ſhall ſet it wholly aſide, and challenge the ſober reaſon of the whole human race to point out the comfort ariſing from the religion of Mahomet to a ſingle individual. Could it originate from his rapin and plunder, or the rivers of blood which he has been the inſtrument of ſhedding? Did it flow from the conduct which he allowed men to exhibit here upon earth, from the tremendous puniſhments of his new-invented hell, or the fulſome enjoyments of his fools paradiſe? All this was incompatible with ſubſtantial comfort, incapable of yielding ſatisfaction to a reflecting mind, and fit only to be imparted by an Arabian Paraclet. There

are no doubt ſeaſons, eſpecially among ignorant barbarians, when the verieſt phantom may have the power to terrify, and every ſilly, ſinful gratification poſſeſs charms to allure; but when the ſoul is once thoroughly alive to a ſenſe of its danger, or inſpired with juſt notions of its original dignity, it muſt be ſomething more than burning pitch that can make it truly alarmed, and more refined fruition than a bacchanalian heaven can preſent, that will be found ſufficient to gratify its deſires. The blaſphemy and abſurdity of Mahomet's claim to a ſhare in the predictions of the ſacred prophets, can only be ſurpaſſed by the ſtupidity of the people who can ſet their ſeal to its truth and juſtice.

As we are now treating of the cunning and artifice of Mahomet, the above inſtances of which muſt have originated from Abdollah and Bahira, we ſhall here take occaſion to mention another which was purely his own.

Being

Being afflicted with that incurable malady the epilepſy, or falling ſickneſs, he made even this ſubſervient to the promotion of his deſigns, with the moſt conſummate addreſs. When the convulſions came upon him, of which it is probable he had previous intimation, he declared that he was then ſo much overpowered by the abundance of the revelations imparted to him, that he could not contain himſelf. The effulgence of the angel Gabriel agitated him in a manner delightfully violent, by the celeſtial viſions he was commanded to bring him from heaven. This was every way ſimilar to the *numine afflatus* of ſome of the ancient oracles, and both were moſt eminently the work of the devil. They equally impoſed on the credulity of mankind, and were leagued againſt the ſalvation of their immortal ſouls, though unacquainted with each other.

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I formerly mentioned the undoubted evidence we have that Mahomet had wicked men to aſſiſt him in the compoſition of his Coran, but I omitted a circumſtance which is a further corroboration of the ſame fact. In his journey to heaven he ſaw a cock of a moſt ſtupendous ſize, whoſe very wings covered the ſurface of the ſun, and cauſed an eclipſe of that glorious luminary. He is, it ſeems, the angel of the cocks, who intercedes with heaven in behalf of the whole tribe, and when the Almighty ſings a morning hymn, he harmonioufly joins in concert, ſo very loud and ſhrill, that all creatures in the univerſe hear it, except men and fairies. But on the day of judgement he will crow no more, which will be a warning to every creature, except the two forementioned claſſes. Mahometans reckon three voices which God always delights to hear; the firſt is the voice of him who is conſtantly employed in reading the Coran; the ſecond, the voice of that man who gets up early to pray;

pray; and the third the voice of this huge cock. It was a capital ſtroke of policy to exclude all men from hearing this creature's crowing, ſince no other animal or inſect could call him a liar. To be employed in ſinging hymns is incompatible with abſolute perfection and eternal independence, and therefore to aſcribe ſuch an exerciſe to God is no better than blaſphemy. All this nonſenſe about the cock was not the reſult of Mahomet's own prolific invention, but entirely manufactured by Abdollah from the Babyloniſh Talmud, in which there is a ſimilar ſtory, a particular account whereof may be ſeen in Buxtorf's Hebrew Lexicon.

From all that has been ſaid, it is manifeſt that the iſſue of the diſpute between us and the enemies of chriſtianity muſt terminate in this—having aſſerted that an Impoſtor muſt be ſupremely wicked, aſſiſted only by wicked men, have ſecular intereſt entirely in view,

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and be incapable of carrying his point without terror and compulſion; it remains for the votaries of deiſm to prove that theſe are not eſſential pre-requiſites of every deceiver. If they cannot do this, let them try to fix any one of them upon the ſyſtem of doctrines and opinions given to the world by Chriſt, and I ſhall not heſitate to renounce it as an impious cheat. But if light and darkneſs; nay, if good and evil differ not more eſſentially than Jeſus and Mahomet, the divine miſſion of one of them is from thence fully eſtabliſhed. The religion of Mahomet is a religion of war and bloodſhed, but that of Chriſt recommends peace and benevolence. The one cannot exiſt without rapin and plunder, while the ſame horrid actions are an eternal diſgrace to the other, prevent its rapid ſpreading through all nations of the earth, and often draw down the vengeance of heaven on its unworthy profeſſors. Peace is its darling theme, and peace it ſhall yet ſpread from pole to pole, in

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ſpite of all the tyrants and plunderers upon earth. When it goes forth triumphant, trampling on every oppoſition, and repairing the ruins of Mahometan butchery, "then ſhall the wolf dwell with the lamb, and the leopard lie down with the kid; and the calf, and the young lion, and the fatling together, and a little child ſhall lead them. The cow and the bear ſhall feed, their young ones ſhall lie down together, and the lion ſhall eat ſtraw like the ox. The ſucking child ſhall play upon the hole of the aſp, and the weaned child ſhall put his hand on the cockatrice's den." Here is a plain intimation that men would not devour each other in the ferocious manner they do, were the goſpel univerſally felt in its renovating power, and firmly believed. Every war, except that which is purely defenſive, repreſents man in a more odious light than the beaſts of prey, who never worry or deſtroy their own ſpecies. We may, therefore, learn humanity from the very tyger, and bluſh and be aſhamed at the

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deportment of the lion. Things morally and eternally wrong are not changed in their nature by refinement and poliſh. It is indeed poſſible to give butchery ſuch an outward glitter as to deceive the unwary; but the philoſophical eye ſees it butchery ſtill.

We have much need to recommend the benevolent ſpirit of chriſtianity to the notice of each other, as well as tranſport it to the Pacific Ocean; for I aſſert that the civilized European who murders mankind with a gilded bauble called a ſword, the Indian who ſcalps, and the Cannibal who eats his fellow-creature, are alike unacquainted with the goſpel of Jeſus. Nation ſhall not always riſe againſt nation, nor kingdom againſt kingdom; for when the name of Jeſus is univerſally revered, men ſhall not learn the deſtructive art of war any more. The earth is large enough to contain us all, and God intends that we ſhould live upon it in peace, harmony, and comfort.

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The goſpel ſhall annihilate thoſe furious paſſions which gave war birth, and ſtill adminiſter fuel to its devaſtations, and the whole world ſhall yet conſider the exploits of Alexander, Miltiades, or Julius Cæſar as the deadly tricks of a madman. The celeſtial hierarchy proclaimed peace on earth, and good will towards men at the nativity of Chriſt, and therefore thoſe bleſſings ſhall be enjoyed in their utmoſt extent when the knowledge of him pervades the globe. Then our ears will be no more ſtunned by recitals of mad cruſades in ſupport of a thing falſely called religion, nor of empires courting diſgrace by conqueſt and murder. Powder, bullets, cannons, bombs, howitzers, and grenades will be no more known, except the benevolent heart may think proper to preſerve them as monuments of human folly, and, pointing to them with pity and aſtoniſhment, exclaim—lo! theſe are the things which were held in eſtimation by our progenitors when

mankind were lunatics. Let it not, however, be imagined, that the chriſtian religion diſclaims ſelf-defence. No!—Such indeed have been the ideas of enthuſiaſm, cant, and hypocriſy, in order to gain converts; but the man who will not defend himſelf, his family, or his country, is an enemy to God. The militia, therefore, of every nation under heaven, ſhould be ſpoken of in terms of the higheſt reſpect, becauſe they never unſheath the glittering ſword but in defence of their country. Yet, at the arrival of the glorious period which is to behold chriſtianity univerſally eſtabliſhed in the world, even the militia will be no more required; for when none upon earth are diſpoſed to attack, defence muſt be uſeleſs. Delightful æra in the annals of the world! I cannot, I dare not ſuppoſe, that a ſingle individual bearing the name of man can be ſuch a monſter as not to long for it. Is it not a deſirable thing that man ſhould become the friend inſtead of the

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greateſt enemy of man; glory in the felicity, and not in the deſtruction of his neighbour; do every thing in his power to make his life comfortable, and convert all inſtruments of murder into laboring utenſils? Drive on, O Time, thy chariot wheels, and bring the ever-memorable epoch when men ſhall gain the uſe of their faculties,—when there ſhall be nothing to hurt nor deſtroy, no garments rolled in blood, nor groans of expiring myriads to harrow up the ſoul of pity. Theſe being the happy effects which the univerſal ſpread of chriſtianity muſt produce, in ſpite of its enemies and mongrel profeſſors, the monſtrous blaſphemy and abſurdities of Mahomet muſt fall before it like Dagon before the ark. The conteſt is between barbarity and benevolence, between Jehovah and a monſter in the ſhape of a man, and therefore I leave you to judge who ſhall gain the victory.

It was no doubt poſſible to have drawn out this hiſtory of Mahomet to a much greater length; but as every material incident of his life has been brought into view, which was in the leaſt connected with the promotion of his infernal plan, it is hoped that the want of prolixity will be the more eaſily pardoned. I do not ſuppoſe that a fact or idea gains any thing by being hunted through two or three pages, if it can be pertinently expreſſed in two or three ſentences. Some men have the art of ſaying a great deal upon little, which it muſt be acknowledged is an excellent quality in a mere book-maker; but it is my misfortune to expreſs my ideas for the moſt part in few words. However, it would ill become me to judge of the merits of theſe two ſorts of compoſition, ſince the public who are to be pleaſed or inſtructed, have the beſt right to decide. But after we have commenced hiſtorian, by an impartial delineation of Mahomet's life, it is extremely natural to aſk, what is the uſe of

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it in the library of a chriſtian? It can be no more agreeable to the benevolent heart of a diſciple of Jeſus than the life of that licenſed thief and butcher of the human race, Alexander the Great, conſidered in itſelf, but I preſume it may be made intereſting in another point of view. He who has the honor of being an advocate for the New Teſtament, has no doubt been often told that it is an impoſition upon the public, a ſyſtem calculated to deceive the world, and as much an impoſture as the Arabian Coran. To ſhew, either how far this is founded in fact, or how clearly it demonſtrates the ignorance as well as the wickedneſs of thoſe who make the aſſertion, I ſhall now attempt a compariſon of the lives and ſyſtems of the two. I hope to demonſtrate as clearly as the divine exiſtence, or any axiom in mathematics, that if Jeſus Chriſt was an Impoſtor, Mahomet was unqueſtionably a prophet ſent from God. I ſhall prove that there is no other alternative, and therefore if Mahomet was a deceiver, the

divinity of the miſſion of Chriſt follows of conſequence. In drawing this contraſt I ſhall do what I believe was never done before in a controverſy of a religious nature. I ſhall appeal to none but the enemies of Chriſt, and none ſhall be permitted to ſpeak for Mahomet but his determined friends. This is more than any deiſt could reaſonably expect, and more I preſume than he would venture to demand. But as men of the moſt abandoned principles and deportment never have ſtained the Character of Chriſt with any thing immoral or ambitious, and as the greateſt advocates for the miſſion of Mahomet have never been able to deny that he was extremely wicked; this conceſſion will do me no injury, uncommon and unprecedented as it is.

The very circumſtance which proves that Mahomet was a moſt infamous Impoſtor, demonſtrate that Jeſus was a prophet ſent from God.

God. No two perſonages ever appeared in the world more perfect and abſolute contraſts to each other, than the founders of the Turkiſh and Chriſtian religion. Chriſt was pure and unſpotted in the whole of his deportment, even confining ourſelves to the atteſtations of his enemies; but Mahomet was a ſink of iniquity, luſt, and ambition, if we will liſten to his friends. Jeſus employed no weapons in defence of his miſſion, but the artillery of reaſon and argument, joined to the impetuous influence of ſtupendous miracles, while Mahomet could do nothing without the energy of the ſword. Chriſt gave the world a ſyſtem of doctrines and precepts, the belief and practice of which muſt make men ſupremely happy, although they ſhould be reduced to nothing at death; while the doctrines of Mahomet and his various injunctions can yield no ſolid comfort to a rational mind, even in this life, but which muſt unqueſtionably bring them to everlaſting torment, if

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there is a ſtate of being beyond the preſent. Ignorant and uncultivated as the Arabs might be in the days of this arch deceiver, they could never be ſo completely ſtupid and unacquainted with every thing which a God muſt require from his creatures, whether relating to faith or manners, as their acceptance of his ſyſtem plainly indicated, had they not been forced. But it is impoſſible to conceive how men ſhould refuſe to be pious, benevolent, and juſt. Theſe three words contain an epitome of the goſpel, and therefore to embrace it with the ſword brandiſhing defiance, would not be half ſo aſtoniſhing as to reject it without any reſtraint. But this contraſt is too laconic to reach conviction to every mind, which renders it neceſſary to ſpread out the leading ideas in the ſubſequent paragraphs.

Before a man can deliberately undertake to be an Impoſtor, he muſt be ſupremely wicked, entirely incapable of remorſe of conſcience

ſcience, and the determined enemy of every thing that is good. He muſt take no thought of the provocation given to the Almighty by ſuch a ſtep, nor of the probability that he may be made a ſtanding monument of the divine indignation. The truth of this aſſertion requires little proof. To cheat a man out of a ſum of money, or of any thing elſe to which he has a legal title, is, by the general conſent of mankind, allowed to be criminal. To extend the ſcale, and attempt to to cheat thouſands in a ſimilar manner, is a ſtill higher degree of guilt; but to endeavour to impoſe upon the whole human race, and cheat them out of the everlaſting happineſs of their precious ſouls, is a ſpecies of iniquity for which no language has a name. It is a thouſand times worſe than all the murders which Alexander the Great ever committed, and a forgery upon heaven to an infinite amount. Such a monſter was Mahomet, his friends being judges, for their numerous

apologies

apologies for his inſatiable luſt and ungovernable ambition are demonſtrations of his wickedneſs. But the character of Chriſt was holy and unſpotted, free from every tincture of pride or ambition, for all attempts to raiſe him to regal magnificence were rejected with diſdain. He went about continually doing good, and his life was a beautiful tranſcript of that ſublime piety and virtue which he inculcated upon others. This, all his firſt enemies have allowed, who examined his life with uncommon attention, and the microſcopic eye of deiſm has not yet found a blot in it. Vaninus, who died a martyr for atheiſm, having ſpent much time in the inveſtigation of the character of Chriſt, to ſee if he could diſcover in it any ſymptoms of an ambitious ſpirit, or a thirſt for ſecular authority, at laſt gave up the ſearch as altogether hopeleſs. Reader, whether of theſe two, think you, was the prophet of God? I leave you to anſwer the queſtion, for I would not inſult your underſtanding by anſwering it for you.

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The whole ſyſtem of an Impoſtor muſt be a bundle of contradictions, for what he commands at one time, he will find it neceſſary to countermand another. Perſonal eaſe, ſafety, and grandeur being the only motives by which he can be actuated, the current of popular opinion muſt frequently be humoured, and the ſtern mandate of to-day become the humble recantation of to-morrow. Thus it fared with the Coran of Mahomet, in which he was often under the neceſſity of contradicting himſelf, either to obtain ſomething which he deemed good, or to avoid ſome ſerious danger. It is a motley jumble of inconſiſtencies, for what is a crime in one chapter is a commendable action in another. His admirers have laid their heads together in order to account for this, while a perſon with half an eye muſt perceive it to be unaccountable. That God ſhould inſpire a man to call vice virtue, and virtue vice, is the moſt horrid blaſphemy that can be conceived. But

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the ſyſtem of the Lord Jeſus, how conſiſtent throughout! All its doctrines and precepts, its promiſes, threatenings, and encouragements bear upon one point,—the manifeſtation of the divine glory, and the ſubſtantial happineſs of the human race. While the Coran makes God the author of ſin, and exhibits him as highly pleaſed with every ſpecies of debauchery, the New Teſtament affirms that he is the enemy of all unrighteouſneſs, and muſt be angry with the wicked every day. Mahomet ſays, you cannot diſpleaſe Allah by vice and wickedneſs; but Chriſt ſays, there is no poſſibility of obtaining the divine favor and friendſhip in a courſe of impiety. Finally, Mahomet ſays, men ſhall be brutes even in paradiſe, where wine and ſenſuality will conſtitute their happineſs; but Chriſt ſays, nothing but abſolute purity ſhall dwell in heaven, where men will be delivered from all manner of corruption, pollution, or defilement, and ſwallowed up, if I

may

may ſo expreſs myſelf, in the boundleſs extacies of the beatific viſion.

An Impoſtor muſt be incapable of producing any evidence of his pretended miſſion, ſufficient to ſatisfy a rational being, becauſe he is not a meſſenger from that God who has all nature at his command. He will not venture to make the experiment of working a miracle, being conſcious to himſelf that he has not the power. Mahomet of conſequence never attempted to work any, but labored to remove the importunity of the multitude upon that ſubject by the ſhifts and evaſions which have been already mentioned. But Chriſt made no ſhifts nor evaſions, for in open day, without previous preparation, and before numbers who were prejudiced againſt him, he performed the moſt ſtupendous miracles. He gave ſight to thoſe who were born blind, raiſed the dead, and fed five

thouſand men with food ſufficient for fifty, I will not aſk the apoſtles, I will not aſk a ſingle chriſtian upon earth whether Jeſus ever wrought any miracles; but I will aſk Celſus, Porphyry, Tacitus, or Tryphon, all ſworn enemies to Chriſt, and they will acknowledge he did. Celſus, it is true, aſcribed them to the power of magic, but the facts themſelves he never preſumed to controvert. It was reſerved for Celſus to diſcover that legerdemain cou'd fill a man's belly, and is an aſſertion which muſt make a deiſt bluſh, a thing not very eaſily accompliſhed.

But it is ſaid that miracles are not capable of proof from human teſtimony, and therefore they cannot be believed. As an unalterable experience, ſays Mr Hume, has eſtabliſhed the laws of nature, the proof againſt a miracle from the very nature of the fact, is as entire as any argument from experience can poſſibly be imagined. That may

may readily be admitted, and yet it is no argument at all againſt the truth of a miracle. Facts are immutably the ſame, independent of our conceptions reſpecting them. A miracle is an object of ſenſe, and therefore can be as fully atteſted by credible witneſſes as the aſſaſſination of Julius Ceſar. I maintain that whatever is poſſible can be proved, but a miracle, ſays Mr Hume, admits of none, and is rather a ſubject of deriſion than of argument; therefore in oppoſition to his own premiſes, it is a fact in the nature of things impoſſible. Perhaps it may be ſaid that it admits of proof from the teſtimony of ſenſe; but this makes nothing for the cauſe of infidelity. All mankind have as good a right as Mr Hume had, to demand ſatisfactory evidence. If that evidence be the report of the ſenſes, it is eaſy to ſee that in all ages and nations miracles muſt be wrought to gain the aſſent of men; there muſt be an uniform ſuſpenſion of the laws of nature to ſupport the claim of any

revelation. But according to his own account, that which we ſee happen in a uniform and regular manner is not miraculous; and here again the poſſibility of ſuch events is denied. The whole force of Mr Hume's artillery againſt miracles is included in the following ſentence, which, as he terms it himſelf, is a maxim worthy of our attention. He affirms that "no teſtimony is ſufficient to eſtabliſh a miracle, unleſs the teſtimony be of ſuch a nature, that its falſehood would be more miraculous than the fact which it endeavours to eſtabliſh. Then, and not till then, can it pretend to command my belief or opinion." Although I hope to make it appear that ſuch evidence can never be obtained, and that it would, upon his hypotheſis, deſtroy itſelf; yet it was at leaſt candid to tell us what kind of evidence he would have deemed ſufficient. To ſay that any event can be more miraculous than a miracle, is not the language of philoſophy; for although every miracle requires an exertion of power above human, yet we

cannot

cannot ſay that one miracle is more miraculous than another miracle, becauſe it may require a ſuperior degree of power. That the teſtimony of any perſon or perſons can be miraculous, is phyſically impoſſible. The ſuppoſition of falſehood, in their relation of facts, may be truly aſtoniſhing; but it can never be called a ſuſpenſion of the laws of nature. When he laid down this favorite maxim with ſuch an air of triumph, he certainly was not aware that it would deſtroy itſelf. The force of the evidence which he allows ſufficient to eſtabliſh the truth of a religious miracle, is the only circumſtance that muſt have rendered his aſſent impoſſible. If the teſtimony be more miraculous than the fact which it is brought to ſupport, it follows from his own conceſſion, that a miracle muſt be believed. But were that teſtimony to aſſume a miraculous nature, it would not only diſprove the miracle it deſigned to eſtabliſh, according to another beloved poſition of his,

but neceſſarily deſtroy its own authority, abſtractly conſidered. The whole amount, therefore, of this wonderful maxim is, to demand an impoſſibility in proof of what is poſſible, and which, though it could be granted, would be an everlaſting barrier againſt the belief of miracles, even upon his own hypotheſis. It would be to make one miracle prove another, while all ſuch events, according to him, are ſubjects of deriſion, not of argument. Nay, Mr Hume, I am not done with you yet. It would be to prove a leſſer miracle by a greater, or to eſtabliſh the truth of what is highly incredible by a ſomething that is more ſo. Elegant reaſoning! admirable logic indeed! I cannot help being grieved, that the man who could write the matchleſs hiſtory of England, ſhould have been betrayed into the vindication of ſuch ineffable ſtupidity, merely from a ſpirit of oppoſition to the chriſtian religion. He was diſappointed of preferment in the univerſity

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of Edinburgh, but that innocent book the New Teſtament,—what evil had it done him?

Mahomet declares he could work no miracles, but Chriſt wrought many, his enemies being judges. They are objects of ſenſe, and conſequently as capable of proof as any matter of fact. The only circumſtance which can affect their credibility is the ſuſpicious character of eye-witneſſes; but when it is impoſſible that they could be deceived themſelves, and when no reaſon can be aſſigned by which it may appear that they meant to deceive others, no ſophiſtry upon earth can prove why they ſhould not be credited. If either of theſe charges can be brought againſt the apoſtles, and fairly ſubſtantiated, I ſhall become the willing proſelyte of infidelity.

Finally, no man who reſolves to commence Impoſtor muſt venture to exclaim againſt the pecu-

peculiar foibles, nor even the darling vices of thoſe whom he means to delude. This would be to rouſe their indignation againſt him, to pave the way to innumerable ſufferings, perhaps to death itſelf, and give the finiſhing ſtroke to his ſyſtem as ſoon as it is formed. Senſual happineſs, grandeur, and dominion, being the only objects he can poſſibly have in view by endeavouring to delude mankind, and thus to rob God of his right; he will ſtudy their humours with as much care and indefatigable induſtry as men can ſtudy the ſciences. Poverty and contempt, perſecution and death, being the chief objects of his horror and averſion, he will ſhun them with as much aſſiduity as the jaws of a lion. As he deſigns to attain the unmoleſted, the unlimited gratification of his appetites and paſſions by ſuch a dreadful ſtep, he will be extremely cautious how he cenſures. All theſe things muſt be foreſeen by a deceiver, in the above manner he will find it neceſſary to act, and all the fore-mentioned dangers he

muſt

muſt labor to avoid. What avails his ſcheme if he is impriſoned for life, or put to death? To what purpoſe is it to aim at ſupreme authority, if any ſtep of his conduct ſhould exclude him from it for ever? Theſe things were well underſtood, and artfully managed by Mahomet, who yielded to the darling paſſions of his countrymen, and denied them the gratification of no appetite which they were determined to indulge. Not contented with allowing them to ſin here, and encourage them in vices to which they were probably ſtrangers before, he allowed them to hope for all manner of ſenſuality through everlaſting ages. But Chriſt waged perpetual war with every ſpecies of iniquity, and reprobated the moſt favorite vices of the greateſt perſonages upon earth. In proportion as error and wickedneſs became popular, and conſequently when it was dangerous for a deceiver to meddle with them, he increaſed

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in the thunder of his eloquence and force of his reaſoning againſt them, making no ſecret of the terrible vengeance of Almighty God, which the wretched abettors of ſuch a cauſe had to expect. Amidſt innumerable trials, afflictions, and perſecutions, he purſued impiety with a ſteady pace, and even in the certain proſpect of death itſelf, he maintained his oppoſition to the commiſſion of wickedneſs. Inſtead of compromiſing the matter between men's pre-conceived opinions and his ſyſtem, he combated every argument in ſupport of error and abſurdity with a reſolute firmneſs which nothing could intimidate. By a candid examination of this conciſe contraſt, I hope it will appear manifeſt that Chriſt and Mahomet are antipods to each other, and that if the one of them be a deceiver, it is abſolutely impoſſible that the other can.

I will

I will here ſubjoin ſome miſcellaneous obſervations, purpoſely omitted in the body of the hiſtory. The deſign of this omiſſion was, that the narrative might not be interrupted by any circumſtance not eſſentially connected with the principal deſign. The man who expects to be conſidered by poſterity as a good, that is, an impartial hiſtorian, ought to be totally devoid of three pernicious qualities, I mean prejudice, party ſpirit, and an imagination incapable of being confined by the reins of judgement. Actuated by theſe, a man loſes ſight of his venerable character as a defender of truth, and degenerates into the contemptible retailer of fiction and romance. He who commences poet may be lawfully indulged in paying his court to fancy, but he who ventures to take up the hallowed pen of hiſtory, muſt keep ſacred truth for ever in his eye. Rightly to inform, or completely to miſlead the human race, and that too in matters of the greateſt moment,

ment, muſt attach to every hiſtorian the higheſt reſponſibility. He deſerves either the greateſt praiſe, or the moſt unlimited execration. If he executes his work well, a diſcerning world will not deny him his dearly bought laurels. His taſk is no leſs honorable than it is laborious; for to give a collection of dates and facts that delightful garb and pleaſing appearance of which every fine taſte is enamored, and yet rigidly adhere to the dictates of veracity;—to diſcriminate between the probable, the impoſſible, and the real;—in one word, to make pertinent, informing, and judicious reflections on every intereſting, or even incidental occurrence,—*hic labor, hoc opus eſt*——this is a work indeed.

If a man, aſſuming this character, is guided by prejudice and party ſpirit, he deſerves to be ſtigmatized as the moſt abominable cheat, for liſtening to the hated offſpring of con-

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ſummate ignorance. If his foible conſiſts in harkening to the voice of fancy, he ought rather to be pitied than abhorred, for a poetical hiſtorian is a moſt contemptible animal. Deeply penetrated by theſe ideas, I have no doubt attempted to avoid what I conceive to be defects in a writer of hiſtory, and therefore I have purpoſely ſhunned taking any notice of a thouſand remarks and aſſertions reſpecting Mahomet, becauſe I conſidered them as deſpicable rubbiſh. I generally found them in hiſtorians who had the pernicious qualities formerly mentioned, or elſe in ſuch as were poſſeſſed of very eminent endowments, but were nevertheleſs weak enough to be led out of themſelves by the current of popular opinion.

Some have been credulous enough to believe, that a bull was trained to bring Mahomet the Coran upon his horns, and that he had pigeons taught to approach his ears, which he wiſhed to be conſidered as the

ſpirit of God. Theſe are ſuch palpable abſurdities, and ſo completely calculated to deſtroy, inſtead of advancing his deſigns, that they never would have been practiſed by a ſagacious deceiver. They who could hand them down to poſterity as matters of fact, muſt have had a very mean opinion of the judgement of mankind, for even to mention them with any gravity of face, ſeems an arduous taſk. It is not unlikely, however, that they were not ſeriouſly believed at firſt, but wholly invented, and induſtriouſly circulated by chriſtians, in order to render him as odious as poſſible. I will not condemn an honeſt indignation at the wickedneſs of Mahomet, what every man muſt feel who regards the honor of God and the felicity of the human race; but when the indulgence of it leads to the forging of lies, and then giving them to the world as ſomething of an oppoſite nature, leaving it to the ingenuity of ſucceeding ages to winnow the chaff from the wheat; ſuch indignation becomes criminal and baſe.

It

It is equally incredible that Mahomet ſhould have been aſſiſted by two chriſtians, whom it is ſaid he found at Mecca, and who were poſſeſſed of copies of the Old and New Teſtament. To ſay that theſe were aiding to him in the compoſition of his Coran, is to aſſert that a ſcheme which required the moſt profound ſecrecy, was brought to perfection in a public manner. His real coadjutors were unqueſtionably brought there by himſelf, and none elſe permitted to be privy to his deſigns. They would be ſworn to keep it a ſecret, and we have found already from his murdering of Bahira, that he did not conſider even his oath as a ſufficient ſecurity.

It is truly aſtoniſhing to think what ſome men will believe, and alſo defend. Mahomet does not want followers who maintain that he was a pure, immaculate ſaint from four years of age, notwithſtanding he was both a robber, a murderer, and an adulterer. The

angel Gabriel took him from among his play-fellows, extracted his heart, wrung out the blood which contained the ſeeds of iniquity, and put it in again in a twinkling. Theſe and a thouſand ſuch fooleries, I did not deem it proper to mention in the body of the hiſtory, and I only make mention of them here as a caution to the credulous, requeſting them to judge of facts with impartiality, allowing reaſon to determine whether the proofs in ſupport of their truth be equally as convincing as the arguments on the other ſide. Nay, whether many things related concerning him as true, do not obviouſly involve their own reputation. Without this rational and juſt mode of procedure, it would be impoſſible to free the hiſtory of our holy religion from many abſurdities and follies which profane wits and determined liars have often laid to its charge. For the ſame reaſon that we ought to condemn Mahomet when he is worthy of it in the cleareſt manner,

ner, it is our duty to free him from the imputation of every thing which he neither ſaid nor did, admitting nothing to operate to his prejudice which is dubious or improbable. The devil himſelf is entitled to juſtice.

It is indeed extremely difficult in ſome caſes to hate wickedneſs, without at the ſame time abhorring its perpetrator; but if an hiſtorian is not capable of doing ſo, it is not to be expected that he will always ſpeak the truth. To admit every thing againſt Mahomet which ignorance or malice may deem it proper to advance, is to deprive ourſelves of the power of refuting the moſt conſummate nonſenſe againſt chriſtianity. For example, Celſus wiſhes the world to believe that Chriſt wrought miracles by the power of magic; but who in his ſenſes will take the infidel's word for this? While reaſon declares it phyſically impoſſible to fill a man's belly by

legerdemain, ten thouſand ſhip loads of ſuch a man as Celſus may affirm it, without running the hazard of being believed by any.

In contemplating the wonderful revolution accompliſhed by Mahomet, the inquiſitive mind ſeems not altogether ſatisfied with its oſtenſible reaſons. If capable of bringing about the ſubjugation of ſouls, it may be ſaid that they do not appear adequate to the taſk of continuing it in exiſtence, and encouraging its ſpread. It muſt be granted that his flattering of the great, and bribing of the poor; his indulgence of ſenſuality upon earth, and voluptuous paradiſe beyond the grave, joined to the irreſiſtible argument of compulſion or force, could not fail to overpower for a little; but how has even the energy of the ſword kept it ſo long in being? An eminent perſonage once ſaid of chriſtianity, if this work be of men, it will come to nothing, but if it

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be of God, ye cannot overthrow it. No man, I truſt, for the honor of his own underſtanding, will ever apply this to the religion of Mahomet, and infer that it muſt be from heaven, as it has continued above a thouſand years. Such an inference would be ſophiſtical and abſurd. It is wholly deſtitute of external evidence, as we have formerly evinced, and it contains innumerable internal marks of forgery and deception.

If this inference will not hold good, perhaps it may be ſaid that its exiſtence upon earth for ſo long a period is totally inexplicable. Men have been as ſecurely fettered by the manacles of deſpotiſm in a political, as the Arabs ever were in a ſpiritual ſenſe by the impoſture of Mahomet, and yet they have brought about their own emancipation in defiance of oppoſition. From being the abject ſlaves of unlimited power, they have paſ-

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ſed to a ſtate of independence like a ſhock of electricity. Such phænomena, it muſt be granted, have been beheld in the political world, and conſequently it is logical enough to conclude, that a ſimilar eſcape might be made from the fangs of ſpiritual deſpotiſm. It ought, however, to be remembered, that men are ſeldom ſo much concerned about their ſouls as their bodies, nor ſo much taken up with how they ſhall be in a future ſtate, as how they ſhall acquire eaſe, honor, and independence while they ſojourn upon earth. Add to this, that if conſcience can be kept quiet, and an unlimited toleration given to the indulgence of their favorite paſſions; it is not ſuch a difficult matter as at firſt ſight we might imagine, to continue them in chains. Give moſt men thoſe things for which corrupt nature has a ſtrong predilection, and you may make them accede to any religious abſurdity you think proper to propoſe.

poſe.* The cauſe of this eaſy credulity in religious matters is very obvious, for Gallio like they, care for none of theſe things. While it is beyond the limits of the human underſtanding to ſay at preſent, whether an invaſion or a mental revolution will ultimately prove the overthrow of the fooleries of Mahomet, I would add to the above ſpeculations, that it is allowed to flouriſh in the courſe of divine providence, for the following reaſons.

The Supreme Being often permits men to have their conſciences enſlaved by ſpiritual tyranny,

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* I diſtinguiſh between ACCEDE and BELIEVE, becauſe there is an eſſential difference between them. A man may yield a kind of aſſent to a blaſphemous creed for the ſake of grandeur or emolument, but it is altogether impoſſible that he can firmly believe it. In the one caſe he makes it his trade, while he would require indubitable evidence of its veracity in the other, which by hypotheſis he can never obtain.

tyranny, as a ſcourge for the ſtupendous height of wickedneſs at which they have arrived, or for the glaring abuſe of favorable opportunities of eſcaping from ignorance. Ingratitude, negligence, ſelf-conceit, and profligacy of manners, forged the chains of deluſion by which the church of Rome has been fettered for ſo many centuries. Had chriſtians highly valued and ſuitably improved the bleſſings of the everlaſting goſpel, we had never heard of that many-headed monſter who uſurped the place of God, but whoſe horrid dominion, we truſt, is now drawing to its end. In like manner, if the Arabs and others had conſulted reaſon more than luſt and a deſire to plunder;—the dictates of conſcience rather than the hope of preſent and and everlaſting ſenſuality, their abandoned prophet would have fallen the unpitied victim of his own impiety. But when the ignorance of mankind is not purely invincible; when they continue in rebellion againſt God,

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and in the indulgence of their appetites, contrary to the light, even of reaſon itſelf; it is only juſt that they ſhould be made the dupes of the greateſt villain. This accounts for the preſent ignorance and barbariſm of the Africans, as well as the infatuation of the ſons of Iſhmael.

But I alſo conceive that ſo large a portion of the globe is allowed to be ſubjugated by the forgery of Mahomet, to be a ſtanding monument of the divine goodneſs to us, and of the terrible judgements we may reaſonably dread, if we do not improve our bleſſings. Thouſands among us are almoſt as capable of being made the dupes of impoſition as the Arabians were, and ſurely their abuſe of the light of nature was not ſo criminal in the ſight of God, as our total indifference about the goſpel of his ſon. We may therefore be left to be cheated out of our reaſon by ſome dexterous Impoſtor, while others growing

wiſe

wiſe by the conſequences of our folly, may read our horrid crimes in their tremendous puniſhment. It is needleſs to diſſemble, that we do not deſerve the divine favors we enjoy, which are equalled by nothing but our ingratitude, and of conſequence they may be ſpeedily withdrawn. Where is now the celeſtial knowledge once enjoyed by the ſable natives of Africa's burning climes, when the immortal Origen preached to them the merits of a Saviour? Is it fled, without leaving a trace behind that it once was there, except in the faithful page of hiſtory, and ſhall not we tremble? If we are at preſent as enlightened as we are wicked, let us not forget that we were barbarians in the days of Julius Cæſar. What has been our fate already may be ſo again, which ought to rouſe us to a ſenſe of our danger. Let the miſerable condition of all Mahometan countries inſpire us with gratitude to the Almighty for his diſtinguiſhing love, and make us ſtudy to avert his judge-

judgements by univerſal reformation. The divine permiſſion of ſuch a cheat ſpeaks a bold and animated language, full of inſtruction, and pregnant with reproof. If we have ſuch a lofty opinion of our own penetration, and the wonderful acuteneſs of our reaſoning powers, as to be perſuaded that we could never become the willing ſupporters of abſurdity and fraud; let us recollect what the power of the ſword has accompliſhed already.

If a mental revolution in Mahometan countries will never be able to accompliſh its object, as it has to contend with the ſuperior power of tyranny in arms; we may ſafely conclude that a formidable invaſion will bury in oblivion the blaſphemy of the Coran, and give millions the opportunity of thinking for themſelves. We have already given our opinion of an invaſion, and affirmed that neceſſity alone can juſtify ſuch a ſtep, even for the emancipation of wretched Mahometans. If

this be the method by which divine providence intends to ſet them at liberty, it is not improbable that Paſſwan Oglou is the perſon deſtined by the Almighty for ſo high an office. His troops, it is ſaid, have French officers among them, by whom they are diſciplined, and abundance of French money, by which they are ſupported, ſo that he may yet be able to accompliſh the total ſubverſion of the Ottoman empire. He may be impeded in his progreſs by the interference of neutral governments; but if God intends him to be the ſaviour of Mahometans from ſpiritual bondage, every ſpecies of oppoſition muſt fall before him. I will neither juſtify nor condemn the motives of Paſſwan, becauſe I know them not. If he is purely actuated by rebellion, and a thirſt for perſonal aggrandizement, the conſequences of his conduct, however happy they may be for millions, will not free him from guilt in the ſight of Jehovah. He often employs the moſt wicked inſtruments, actuated by the moſt abominable motives, in order to

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accompliſh his magnificent deſigns. The divine procedure in the whole of his adminiſtration is at preſent involved in obſcurity, and therefore while we ſtand aſtoniſhed at the unexampled ſucceſs of a nation or an individual, he or it may only be an inſtrument in the hand of that God who rides on the whirlwind, and directs the ſtorm. Ideas like theſe, ſtudied with attention, and perpetually kept in view, would cauſe an immenſe ſaving of blood and treaſure to almoſt all the kingdoms, empires, and republics upon earth.

Thoſe who hold the reins of government in Mahometan countries, may be wiſe enough to ſee the abſurdity and blaſphemy of the Coran; but perhaps they are afraid to let the people at large into the ſecret, for fear of the conſequences in a political point of view. It muſt be allowed that abſolute deſpotiſm has every thing to fear from the progreſs of knowledge, and the rapid cultivation

of the human underſtanding; and no governments beneath the canopy of heaven can be better calculated to make the ſubjects wretched, than thoſe we call Mahometan. But no conſtitution, ſuch as ours, can be afraid of inveſtigation and reſearch, for if the ſubjects are as happy as the deſign of civil government can poſſibly make them, its ſafety muſt be inſured as their knowledge is increaſed. Let Turkiſh emperors, therefore, govern with wiſdom, moderation, and benevolence, and then every exertion to enlighten the people, and all poſſible encouragement to ſeparate truth from error in ſpiritual matters, will only give ſtability to the pillars of their thrones. The fooleries of Mahomet will then periſh for ever, without affecting the exiſtence of one good government upon earth. O happy period! whoſe arrival is devoutly to be wiſhed,—when policy and the felicity of mankind will be ſynonimous expreſſions, and when no conſtitution will depend for its ſupport on the ſpread of religious blaſphemy.

Although

Although we had never heard of the character of Mahomet, of his debauchery, injuſtice, cruelty, and cunning, it would be no difficult matter to demonſtrate the Coran to be a forgery from its internal ſtructure. Could we ſuppoſe it poſſible that he ever wrought any miracles, at leaſt what might paſs for ſuch in the judgement of an ignorant rabble; they behoved it to be conſidered as abſolute deluſion, ariſing from the agency of the devil, or the power of magic. When reaſon analizes the Arabian bible, and examines its contents chapter by chapter, with the impartiality of an independent judge, ſhe needs not the want of miracles to pronounce it a fabrication. By this noble faculty alone are we qualified to diſcriminate between right and wrong, truth and falſehood, or what is agreeable to, or incompatible with, the eternal reaſon and fitneſs of things. The book, therefore, which juſtifies a plurality of wives, breaks down the barriers that ſeparate be-

tween virtue and vice, ſanctions robbery and plunder, and offers an apology for every ſpecies of murder, cannot be from God, and neither angel, man, nor devil, could convince me of the reverſe.

But independent of all external evidence, whether ariſing from miracles or the accompliſhment of prophecy, it is eaſy to demonſtrate the divine origin of the New Teſtament from its internal ſtructure. It contains, in addition to any thing mentioned before, ſome doctrines which are ſaid to be beyond the reach of the human underſtanding, and therefore the concluſion of infidelity is, that it cannot be from God. The very oppoſite is the fair and rational inference, for how in the name of wonder can it be a forgery, when it is allowed in ſome reſpects to be beyond our reach, even after it is given to the world? Had it been in all reſpects as plain as the relation of two and two to four, I ſhould have

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more eaſily believed that God was not its author, for in all his other works of creation and providence we find myſteries in abundance. Myſteries in the goſpel, therefore, are only conſiſtent with analogy, and proclaim their author to be the omnipotent Jehovah. But it is affirmed that our future happineſs is not affected by the myſteries of creation, ſince we may enjoy the favor of God for ever, though we ſhould not comprehend even one among a thouſand. So do I aſſert of the goſpel, that ſuch things as tranſcend the graſp of all human reſearch are never made the conditions of eternal life, for a man may be happy through everlaſting ages, according to the ſolemn declarations of the word of God, without comprehending ſuch doctrines as are profeſſedly myſterious.—Faith and repentance are the conditions on which it offers mankind the pardon of ſin, the protection of the Almighty through the whole career of life, and never-ending felicity

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beyond death and the grave. It contains nothing degrading to the author of our being, incompatible with hiſtorical facts, or the peace, good order, and happineſs of ſociety; but recommends and enforces the idea of ſubordination, which is the determined enemy of anarchy and confuſion. In ſhort, it propoſes to make man in all reſpects what diſpaſſionate reaſon declares he ought to be, and would, were its dictates and precepts univerſally obeyed, make this ſublunary ſtate a lively emblem of heaven. Paradiſe would then be reſtored, and every fabulous deſcription of the golden age by the poets of antiquity, be completely verified.

We admire the bleſſings we enjoy as ſubjects of the Britiſh Conſtitution, and perhaps we do not admire in vain, but can you call the beſt of them any other than perpetual remembrancers of human folly and wickedneſs? Even the grand palladium of Engliſh liberty,

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trial by jury, reminds us that we are ſinners, whereas if the goſpel were univerſally believed, ſuch trials would be a palpable abſurdity, and there would ſoon be no words for judge, advocate, or witneſs, in the whole compaſs of human language. It is man's ignorance of the goſpel and contempt of its moral requiſition, that have multiplied the crimes in the catalogue of human wickedneſs. Men who deny this, deduce their ideas from the ſuperſtition, blaſphemy, and nonſenſe which prieſtcraft has attached to chriſtianity, and which have made it aſſume the appearance of a monſter, as unlike the religion of the goſpel as light is to darkneſs. Is it then poſſible that the religion of Mahomet can continue much longer, as it is in every particular the very reverſe of chriſtianity; or can the glorious goſpel of the Son of God be always confined to a ſmall portion of the globe! No individual, nor combination of

monſters,

monſters, however formidable, ſhall be able to preſerve the impoſture of Mahomet from everlaſting deſtruction, nor all the infidels in the univerſe ſet boundaries to the kingdom of the great Meſſiah.

I have heard that in France there are no leſs than fifty thouſand avowed atheiſts, divided into different clubs and ſocieties throughout that extenſive republic, which I believe as firmly as that there are fifty thouſand devils around the throne of God; but ſuppoſing it were true, and by no means a piece of Britiſh manufacture, I do boldly aſſert that their united endeavors, though aſſiſted by four hundred thouſand libertines, atheiſts, and deiſts from England, will neither keep Mahometiſm from the grave of oblivion, nor the HEALER OF THE NATIONS from univerſal triumph. The Lord proſper the pure dictates of the New Teſtament, unincumbered with the names of Peter, Martin or Jack, and completely

pletely diſcomfit the abettors of the Arabian Impoſtor!

In addition to the authors mentioned in the preface, whom I found it neceſſary to conſult for the purpoſe of hiſtorical facts, it is but juſtice to allow that I have been much indebted, for a ſimilar purpoſe, to a life of Mahomet (I believe the only one to be found in Engliſh) written about a century ago, by Dr Prideaux, the then Dean of Norwich. But with all due deference to the great abilities of the learned Dean, neither his language nor arrangement of incidents are worthy of imitation. It wants that nameleſs ſomething, that *ſine qua non* of a good hiſtory which is better felt than deſcribed. It is very deficient in moral and philoſophical reflections, and the Doctor allows many circumſtances both dubious and improbable to paſs through his hands without a critical ſurvey. What he finds abſurd he leaves *in ſtatu quo*,

and

and what he lights upon in obſcurity he ſuffers to remain in darkneſs. It is, however, an uſeful collection of hiſtorical facts; in which light alone I have made any uſe of it. My lot being caſt in a ſmall commercial town where learning is chiefly confined to the humble ſphere of figures, he has made me acquainted with the atteſtations of many authors to which, in my preſent ſituation, I would otherwiſe have had no acceſs. In fine, I have made much about the ſame uſe of it that Archbiſhop Tillotſon did of the divinity of Dr Barrow. While the fundamental ideas of his Grace's ſermons may have been dug out of that theological quarry, the elegant ſuperſtructure is ſo entirely his own, that the whole fabric may be juſtly deemed original. To have ſaid leſs than this would have been doing injuſtice to Dr Prideaux, and to have ſaid more would have been acting in the ſame manner towards myſelf, exhibiting a fooliſh piece of modeſty which it becomes no man to

cheriſh.

cheriſh. Let the two be compared together with the utmoſt attention, and I am confident it will appear that he has only been uſed for the purpoſes already ſpecified.

I therefore throw it on the protection of a candid public, hoping that the peruſal of it will be of ſingular advantage to the cauſe of Chriſtianity, my principal reaſon for undertaking the taſk.

THE

AUTHOR'S APOLOGY

FOR SUBJOINING AN

ACCOUNT OF EGYPT.

CONTRARY to my expectation, the manuſcript has fallen conſiderably ſhort of completing my object. Five numbers were originally promiſed, but the ſize of the page was altered from an octavo to a duodecimo, and forty-eight inſtead of thirty-two pages conſtitute each number. This circumſtance has perhaps,

perhaps made me commit ſome few miſtakes, in ſo far as the repetition of one and the ſame idea may thus be denominated, for unexpected demands came ſo rapidly upon me, that I was often obliged to compoſe in a very haſty manner, or *currente calamo* as the ancients expreſſed it. Having exhauſted the ſubject originally propoſed, by a conciſe deſcription of every material incident connected with the life of Mahomet, I humbly hope my readers will not deem it an unpleaſant addition to this work, ſhould I endeavour to lay before them a ſuccinct account of EGYPT, the nature and diſpoſition of its inhabitants, together with a ſurvey of its moſt wonderful curioſities, whether natural or artificial. This cannot be conſidered as wholly foreign to the primary deſign of theſe ſheets, ſince it forms a province of the unweildy Ottoman Empire, and it becomes intereſting to Britons in another point of view. It is now the theatre of war, occaſioned by the moſt daring and

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adventurous invaſion ever recorded in the annals of hiſtory. Napoleone Buonaparte at the head of thirty, ſome ſay fifty thouſand men, has entered that country, and taken ſome of its principal cities. If the deſpatches of this aſtoniſhing man, ſnatched in ſuch a miraculous manner from the devouring deep, ſhall fully develope his plans to our government, I ſuppoſe that my firſt conjectures reſpecting his final deſtination will be found to have been correct—that he had conceived the deſtruction of our Eaſt India trade.

It is certain that all Arabia muſt have fled before Buonaparte in a pitched battle, but their ſuperior knowledge of their own ſultry deſerts enabled them to do much miſchief by ſecret aſſaſſination; and we cannot expect to find conſcience regulating the deportment of freebooters and thieves. It muſt, however, be acknowledged that his invaſion of Egypt is juſtly reprehenſible, if attempted without the know-

knowledge and consent of the Ottoman Porte, and will unquestionably bring down upon him the vengeance of the Turkish Emperor. It is equally as unjustifiable as the invasion of France during the zenith of Dumourier's glory. But we shall leave him to his destiny, which can be at no great distance, and proceed directly to our account of Egypt. Should he reach the Indian Ocean with the greatest part of his army, there can be no doubt but commodore Blanket will give a good account of him!! If he does not, it is to be feared that his junction with the army of Tippoo Saib will do more injury to Britain than France lately suffered in her naval defeats. But let us not entertain any gloomy apprehensions from his present expedition, however stupendous his genius must be allowed to be, since, in so far as we are able to judge, there does not exist a physical possibility of its ever being accomplished.

ACCOUNT

OF

EGYPT.

ANCIENT EGYPT was divided into three parts, called upper, middle, and lower Egypt, or Thebais, Heptanomis, and Delta. It is now comprized in two, called the northern and ſouthern diviſions, or lower and upper Egypt. It lies between the Mediterranean and Ethiopia from ſouth to north, and between the Red Sea and part of Africa between eaſt and weſt. The inhabitants of this

this country boaſted of their great antiquity, and pretended to have accurate chronological accounts of various tranſactions for more than twenty thouſand years. This piece of empty pride or conſummate ignorance, ſo repugnant to the chronology of every other nation, except the chineſe, who likewiſe carry their time beyond the commencement of creation, can add nothing to the reſpectability of a people, worthy in many reſpects of the eſteem of mankind.

Thebes, in upper Egypt, according to the teſtimony of the moſt reputed hiſtorians, was equal, if not ſuperior to any city upon earth, in point of extent and population. It is reported to have had an hundred gates, by each of which it could ſend out two hundred chariots, and ten thouſand fighting men, or twenty thouſand chariots and one million of ſoldiers; ſo that upon a moderate calculation it muſt have been more than three times

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as large as the city of London. It is now called Said, ſome of whoſe moſt magnificent buildings are yet almoſt entire, ſeeming to bid defiance to the ravages of time. Little minds are ſoon aſtoniſhed, but in Said there is a palace ſtill ſtanding, which the moſt enlightened muſt admire. The extent of ground occupied by it is not perfectly aſcertained; but we may conclude it to be prodigious from what is related by Strabo, who was upon the ſpot. A ſingle hall, which to all appearance is in the middle of it, is ſupported by no leſs than one hundred and twenty pillars, thirty-ſix feet in circumference, and proportionably high. This mocks all modern architecture, and ſhews us to be only pigmies in ſcience compared to ſome of the ancients. It is at preſent of leſs note than other cities, and ſeems to have long ſince yielded to Alexandria, Grand Cairo, and a few others.

Alexandria in lower Egypt, once the metropolis of that country, and ſtill a place of con-

conſiderable importance, was built by Alexander the Great, from whom it derived its name. After the deſtruction of Carthage, it had perhaps the greateſt trade with foreign countries of any city in the known world. Here the conqueror of Italy lately landed with a numerous army, and here Lord Nelſon defeated the French fleet by a manœuvre at once ſingular and dangerous, It is ſituated about one hundred and twenty miles to the north-weſt of Grand Cairo. Here too is ſtill to be ſeen the famous pillar of Pompey, ſeventy feet high, and twenty-five in circumference, one entire ſtone of marble. At the foot of this monument Buonaparte cauſed the brave men to be buried who fell in the taking of Alexandria, and upon it he inſcribed their names. It is ſaid that the immortal Chatterton, whom a callous public allowed to live and die in obſcurity and want, uſed to purchaſe trumpets with the money he received from relations or acquaintances when only a child,

child, and Buonaparte when a very young boy, could ſcarcely be prevented from aſcending in a balloon. Circumſtances like theſe, though ſeldom attended to at that early period, are indications of a genius ſuperior to the reſt of mankind. This was fully verified in the caſe of Chatterton, conſidering how ſhort a time he lived; and it has been completely proved by the achievements of Buonaparte, who no doubt felt an unutterable enthuſiaſm for ancient bravery while at the venerable baſis of Pompey's pillar. In Alexandria was the famous library ſo much talked of all over the world, in which were no leſs than ſeven hundred thouſand volumes, four hundred thouſand of which were unhappily deſtroyed by fire. It is not to be diſputed that many thouſand volumes periſhed in this conflagration, of ſuch vaſt importance to the intereſt of the arts and ſciences, that the inveſtigations of genius will never be able to make up the loſs.

Ptolemy

Ptolemy Philadelphus, one of the kings of Egypt, cauſed the Old Teſtament to be tranſlated from the Hebrew to the Greek by ſeventy-two Jews, ſix out of every tribe; and this is the verſion which now goes by the name of the Septuagint. The moſt ancient and valuable manuſcript of the New Teſtament was alſo met with at Alexandria, a printed copy of which in the old Greek character I have peruſed with much pleaſure, and venture to recommend to the ſons of literature the learned prolegomena written in latin at the beginning of this valuable work.

Grand Cairo is now the city of greateſt note in Egypt, and is ſaid to contain upwards of two millions of inhabitants. It is defended by a caſtle of vaſt ſtrength, the antiquity of which is not certainly known. It is founded upon a rock without the city, the works of which are about three miles in periphery or circumference. A place ſo fortified

tified as it unqueſtionably is, might have reſiſted the force of Buonaparte, who, in ſo far as we can gather from newſpaper intelligence, is very deficient both in cavalry and artillery. It ought, however, to be remembered, that the Reis Effendi or principal ſecretary, together with ſome other miniſters of ſtate, are ſaid to have been baniſhed from the Ottoman Porte, on the ſuppoſition of being friendly to French principles of government. May not the Baſſa of Grand Cairo be likewiſe tinctured with republican ſentiments, in which caſe all the oppoſition made to Buonaparte would be merely a feint to ſave appearances. I do not offer this as a fact, but its being a circumſtance far from impoſſible, affords an important topic for political diſcuſſion. There is at Cairo, within the caſtle, a well called Joſeph's well, perhaps as great a curioſity as any in Egypt. It is three hundred feet deep, cut out of a ſolid rock, having two hundred and twenty ſteps by which you deſcend to it. It

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is ſo gradually ſloped, that the oxen, employed in throwing up the water, can go down the ſteps with the greateſt facility. Should we attentively conſider the wiſe and maſterly policy of Joſeph, while prime miniſter of Egypt, we will not be ſurpriſed to find the inhabitants of that country aſcribing to him every thing great and magnificent. If he did not cauſe it to be dug, ſtill the tradition which has prevailed over every other opinion for time immemorial, is a full demonſtration that it is very ancient. I can find no part of Joſeph's adminiſtration liable to cenſure except one, and that (thank God) is diametrically oppoſite to the deportment of all modern miniſters—his rapid extenſion of the influence of the crown.

The water is brought out of Joſeph's well by means of a large wheel turned by oxen, ſimilar to thoſe engines which are uſed in this

country to draw coals out of our pits, and it is afterwards conveyed from a reſervoir by pipes to all parts of the caſtle. It was anciently wrought by one hundred and fifty ſlaves, when the inhabitants of Egypt were almoſt as wicked as thoſe Europeans who are concerned in the African ſlave trade; but they have long ſince abandoned the practice as inconſiſtent with the Coran of Mahomet, although it ſhould ſeem it is not repugnant to the benevolent ſpirit of chriſtianity!

Horace ſaid of his productions as an author, *exegi monumentum ære perennius*;* but the

* That is, I have executed a monument more laſting than braſs. The Roman bard meant to ſay that he was ſure of immortal fame from his works. We grant that his writings will be admired, while a taſte for elegant poetry, refined wit, and ſound judgment can be found upon earth, but it would have been rather more modeſt, if Horace had allowed another to ſay ſo for him.

the Egyptians, although ſuperior to all the nations of the world for their acquaintance with moſt branches of uſeful knowledge, were chiefly ſolicitous to acquire immortality from their ſublime and magnificent ſpecimens of inimitable architecture. We cannot find beneath the canopy of heaven ſuch awfully grand diſplays of maſonic ſkill, yet ſtanding great in age and noble in decay, after hundreds of ages have elapſed, and looking forward ſtill as if only determined to periſh when nature groans her laſt.

The obeliſks of Egypt are perhaps the moſt ſurpriſing pieces of workmanſhip any where to be met with. Some of them are ſtill ſtanding, and ſome of them brought from that country to Rome by the emperor Auguſtus, and form at this day its greateſt ornaments. Rome, on e the miſtreſs at the world, and ſovereign arbitreſs of ſtates, convinced that

ſhe could never equal Egypt in this ſublime art, deemed it ſufficient honor to borrow what ſhe could not fabricate. Seſoſtris erected two of theſe obeliſks in the city of Heliopolis, each one hundred and eighty feet high, and 36 in circumference.

To form an adequate idea of the vaſtneſs of ſuch an undertaking as the cutting and and erecting of ſuch ſtupendous pillars, it may be neceſſary to obſerve, that no leſs than twenty thouſand men were employed about a ſingle obeliſk. As they were very numerous, and cut in the quarries of upper Egypt, the tranſporting of them with facility to almoſt any part of that country may be deemed miraculous. By a patience and diligence almoſt incredible, they cut canals in the very quarries, and thus by the help of prodigious rafts they availed themſelves of the inundations of the Nile to convey thoſe ſtupendous

ſtones

ſtones to wherever they pleaſed. Many things beyond the reach of individual exertion, cannot ſurmount the collected ſkill and energy of many thouſands.

The pyramids of greateſt magnitude were three in number, although there were many more of inferior note. The largeſt of the three is ſaid by many reſpectable hiſtorians to be no leſs than eight hundred feet high, and each ſide of its ſquare baſe eight hundred, founded upon a rock. When we contemplate in imagination ſuch a dreadful pile, the leaſt ſtone of which it was compoſed being more than thirty feet, finely poliſhed, and covered with hieroglyphics, we are overwhelmed with aſtoniſhment at the unexampled patience, indefatigable induſtry, and conſummate extravagance of the ancient inhabitants of Egypt. It is reported that it coſt upwards of twenty-five thouſand pounds, merely for onions, leeks, and garlic for the workmen,

men, ſo that the ſum total of its expence muſt have been many millions. A hundred thouſand workmen were conſtantly employed, being relieved by a like number at every three months end. It took no leſs than ten years to hew the ſtones, and twenty more to erect it after the materials were got ready. Although its ſummit appears no more than a point to ſuch as view it from the bottom, it is about eighteen feet ſquare, and makes an excellent platform.

A work leſs coſtly, ſtupendous and magnificent, would have tranſmitted its author's name with honor to the end of time; yet it is no leſs aſtoniſhing than it is true, that ſcarce any two hiſtorians agree about the names of thoſe monarchs by whom the pyramids were begun or finiſhed. To what, it may be aſked is this circumſtance to be aſcribed, ſince the perſons by whom they were erected muſt undoubtedly have hoped to derive from them ever-

everlaſting fame? It ſeems capable of being accounted for in the following manner. The time, money, and labor waſted in building them were not made uſe of for the purpoſe of public utility, but to ſatisfy the pride, vanity, and ſelf-conceit of ſome inſignificant tyrants. The reader will perhaps be aſtoniſhed to hear, that all the cruelty and injuſtice, all the profuſion of time and treaſure which thoſe dreadful buildings occaſioned, were only intended to procure—what?—to procure a hated tyrant ſix feet of a tomb! What heart can help feeling indignant at ſuch boundleſs prodigality for ſo pitiful a purpoſe, or fail to adore the ways of divine providence in keeping their names a ſecret by whom they were reared?

But ſuppoſing for a moment, that all this time, labor and treaſure could have been lawfully expended on the burying place of a poor worm of the duſt, yet the object of ſuch ex-

extravagance was ultimately defeated. Such were the cruelties and rigorous exactions of the deſpots by whom they were built, that ſurviving friends durſt not inter them therein, for fear of the juſt vengeance and indigna- of the people. Could an ambitious indivi- dual exceed the impious builders of the tower of Babel, and actually rear a fabric whoſe ſummi would reach to heaven; ſhould a ſing e ſtone of it be laid in tyranny, all his expected glory would be utterly blaſted. It is neither the triple crown nor the ſingle diadem that will ever make a diſcerning poſ- terity fall in love with injuſtice.

Another diſplay of vanity, extravagance, and oſtentation to be met with in Egypt is the famous labyrinth ſo much talked of by ancient hiſtorians. It was a whole group of palaces, twelve in number which were ſaid to conſiſt of not fewer than fifteen hundred rooms. It had an equal number of ſubter-

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raneous apartments, intended as burying places for their monarchs, and as the repoſitories of ſacred crocodiles, which the Egyptians worſhipped as Gods. This furniſhes one remarkable inſtance out of many more which might be aſſigned, that the wiſeſt and moſt intelligent men upon earth were ignorant of God before the promulgation of chriſtianity. The ancient natives of this country we are now deſcribing were no doubt good aſtronomers, ſince the four ſides of the largeſt pyramid were exactly turned to the four cardinal points of the heavens; we have already ſeen that they exceeded the whole world for their knowledge of architecture, and it is thought by Bonnycaſtle and others, that the inundations of the Nile ſuggeſted to them the ſtudy of geometry. Yet amidſt all their acquaintance with ſcience, it is painful to think that they were a thouſand times more ſtupid in theological matters than any modern ſavages. We ſhall

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afterwards have occaſion to ſpeak of their worſhip, when it will be found that gods grew in their very gardens as faſt as muſh-rooms. It was impoſſible to get out of the labyrinth after proceeding any length into it, without a ball of thread or ſome ſuch conductor as was uſed by Dedalus in the labyrinth of Crete, which is thus mentioned by Virgil:

"Dedalus ipſe dolos tecti ambageſque reſolvit,
Caeca regens filo veſtigia."

That is, Dedalus unravels the turnings and windings of the houſe, *by* conducting his dark ſteps with a thread.—I wiſh to tranſlate as literally as poſſible.

Egypt is ſurpaſſed by no country beneath the canopy of heaven for the fertility of its ſoil, and the luxuriancy of its crops, and yet it is very ſeldom watered by the clouds of heaven.

heaven. To what is this to be aſcribed? In this country we know, that while the earth is cheriſhed by the benign influences of the ſun, the exhalations which aſcend from it give back their treaſures to promote vegetation. But Egypt, almoſt totally deprived of this benevolence of the clouds, has it more than compenſated by the inundations of the Nile. The ſource of this river was long a matter of dubious ſpeculation, till it was fully diſcovered by Mr Bruce to be ſituated in Abyſſinia. Its inundations, which overflow the country once a year, beginning about the month of June, and laſting during the three ſubſequent months, leave a fecundity in the ſoil ſuperior to what could be produced by the richeſt manure upon earth. The Nile, after riſing out of Abyſſinia, is gradually accumulating waters from numberleſs rivulets, and then paſſing through Ethiopia in a meandering courſe, it at leaſt falls into Egypt in the magnitude of a river. The inundations are occaſioned

ſioned by the prodigious quantities of rain which fall in Ethiopia at a particular ſeaſon of the year, making the lands more or leſs fertile in proportion to their depth As either a famine or abundance is the effect of every inundation, it will not be deemed ſurpriſing if men in all ages have been uncommonly attentive to the different degrees of its increaſe. A certain author of conſequence among the ancients, ſpeaking upon this ſubject tells us, that when it riſes to the height of twelve cubits (or eighteen feet) a famine is expected; the country ſtill thirſts when it is thirteen; fourteen cubits inſpire the people with good hopes; fifteen diſpels the fear of ſcarcity, and ſixteen gives them tranſport. The kings of Egypt placed a pillar at Memphis with the different degrees of its increaſe marked upon it, the reſult of long experience and attentive obſervation. This cuſtom is ſtill kept up, and at Grand Cairo there is a public proclamation made every day during the inundation, to let the numerous inhabi-

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tants know how high it has risen. When it reaches sixteen cubits (twenty four feet) the sure prognostic of great abundance, the people testify their gratitude to heaven by fire-works, illuminations, festivity, and every demonstration of joy. What a bitter reflection upon Britons! If we have six weeks of the severest drought, even in the most critical season of the year, we fret, murmur, and repine! But when we experience the loving-kindness of the Lord in opening the bottles of heaven, we instantly forget his merciful interference, and remain culpably stupid!

The Nile falls over high rocks between Ethiopia and Egypt in the form of cataracts, making such a dreadful noise as to be heard nine miles off. Here the inhabitants exhibit a scene which is an amusement to themselves, but terrifying to strangers. Two men get into a small boat, one of them to guide and

the other to row her, and after they have kept her for ſome time reſiſting the fury of the waters with much dexterity, they at laſt allow themſelves to be hurried down the precipice with the velocity of an arrow, as if they were to be inſtantly ſwallowed up by the roaring torrent. But all on a ſudden they are diſcovered at a conſiderable diſtance on the calm ſurface of the Nile, after it has returned to its proper courſe.

As it cannot be ſuppoſed that a whole country ſuch as Egypt, about ſix hundred miles long and one hundred and fifty broad, can be entirely overflowed by the Nile, the labor and induſtry of the inhabitants have every where cut large canals, by which the waters are judiciouſly ſelected and advantageouſly diſtributed. Finally, as the high grounds cannot be refreſhed, even by the inſtrumentality of the canals, they uſe what are called ſpiral pumps for throwing it to

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any height, the firſt of which, it is ſaid, was invented by Archimedes while on his travels into Egypt.

In order to preſerve the waters from being waſted as much as poſſible, one Moeris, king of Egypt, cauſed a lake to be dug about twenty miles in circumference, and to be joined with the Nile by a canal about twelve miles long, by which means the ſuperfluous waters were preſerved as a moſt precious treaſure, till the earth ſhould ſtand in need of them. When the inundation was not ſufficient for the purpoſes of vegetation, the waters of the lake were brought in to its aid. So prodigious were the ſluices of this artificial river, if I may ſo call it, that it is confidently reported, by good hiſtorians, that the very expences of opening and ſhutting them amounted to eleven thouſand two hundred and fifty pounds.

The providence of God is conſpicuouſly merciful to this country. How wonderful is it that ſuch prodigious quantities of rain ſhould fall in Ethiopia in order to water it, ſo that in a country where a ſhower of rain ſcarce ever falls, and where the ſoil is dry and ſandy ſhould be the moſt fruitful in the univerſe. It is no leſs remarkable that the north-eaſt winds blow continually during the inundation, to prevent the waters from flowing too rapidly, and to hinder them from being diſcharged into the ſea. In ſhort, the whole procedure of the Almighty is a miracle of goodneſs, which, to the honor of the ancients be it ſpoken, they have not failed to mention. The country of Paleſtine was nouriſhed after a different manner, neither by any inundation, nor occaſional ſhowers, but by rains at two fixed ſeaſons of the year, as the reader will find by conſulting the eleventh chapter of the book of Deuteronomy. The Nile empties itſelf into

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the Mediterranean by ſeven mouths, the two largeſt of which are called the Peluſian and Canopic, from two cities in their vicinity named Peluſium and Canopus, but now Damietta and Roſetta.

Egypt was once a country of prodigious trade and commerce, and Alexandria the chief city of it in this reſpect. All the trade of the weſtern world which it carried on with Perſia, India, Arabia, and the eaſtern parts of Africa, was totally by the Red Sea and the mouth of the Nile, a very long and tedious navigation, till a paſſage was diſcovered above two hundred years ago by the Cape of Good Hope. It was ever eſteemed by antiquity as the magazine of wiſdom and uſeful knowledge and from which the moſt celebrated ſages of Greece and Rome derived their ſkill in the arts and ſciences. Even the immortal Homer, Pythagoras, Plato, Lycurgus, Solon, and many others travelled into Egypt to complete their ſtudies. God

himſelf makes honorable mention of this country, when, in deſcribing the character of Moſes he adds, that he was learned in all the wiſdom of the Egyptians. They were conſummate politicians, and drew their ideas of civil government, not from antiquated precedents and mouldy parchments, but from the nature and circumſtances of man as a ſocial animal. Naturally of a grave and ſerious caſt, they ſoon diſcovered that good government cannot conſiſt in curtailing the eſſential rights of mankind, in the accumulation of ſinecures, or the enriching of individuals at the expence of the reſt, but in making life eaſy, and conferring happineſs on the people at large. Although the government might be called abſolute, as the crown was hereditary, yet there was an eſſential difference between the kings of Egypt and all the ſovereigns of Europe who are conſidered as abſolute. The kings of this country were under greater reſtraints from the laws than any of their ſubjects, and

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conſequently they were utter ſtrangers to that frightful, horrid, and monſtrous opinion, that the mandate of an individual ſhould regulate any country. No foreigner was admitted to important offices under the crown, but natives of the country, and thoſe ſuch as were moſt diſtinguiſhed by their birth, and eſpecially for the nature and extent of their erudition, that they might infuſe nothing mean, puerile, or tyrannical into the minds of their royal maſters, nor exhibit any thing before them incompatible with the dignity of a king. The monarchs of Egypt ſubmitted chearfully to have both the quantity and quality of their victuals and drink preſcribed them, knowing that intemperance is hoſtile to the exerciſe of every manly qualification. They did not eat to tickle the palate, or gratify appetites of their own creating, but thoſe cravings of nature which are peculiar to every climate. God has given us but few appetites to ſatisfy, while the ideal calls of pampered nature are abſolutely

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innumerable. Regularity in eating and drinking was ſo ſcrupulouſly obſerved both by kings and ſubjects, that they ſeemed to be actuated by the preſcriptions of ſome eminent phyſician, while their conduct in this reſpect was only obedience to the eſtabliſhed laws of the land. So zealous and genuine was their attachment to an abſtemious courſe of life, that we are informed there was a temple at Thebes, one of the pillars of which was almoſt covered over with execrations againſt the ſovereign who firſt introduced luxury into the kingdom.

As the morning is juſtly deemed the fitteſt time for attending to buſineſs of importance, when the mind, envigorated and refreſhed by the balmy comforts of ſleep, can contemplate objects with impartiality; this was the ſeaſon fixed upon by the monarchs of Egypt to inveſtigate the merits of all the letters in their poſſeſſion, that they might be enabled to give them ſuch diſpaſſionate replies as required

required the aid of wiſdom, juſtice, or benevolence. They attended places of worſhip every morning as ſoon as they were dreſſed, where ſacrifices were offered up to their falſe deities with the utmoſt ſolemnity and devotion. Here the high prieſt took occaſion to enumerate the good qualities of the king, ſuch as his piety, affability, moderation, juſtice, magnanimity, ſincerity, hatred of falſehood, liberality ſelf-government, and his boundleſs love of merit. He then mentioned the crimes of which kings might be guilty, inſinuating, at the ſame time, that they did not commit any, and pouring forth imprecations againſt ſuch miniſters as gave them pernicious counſel, or attempted by any means to diſguiſe the truth. Nothing could have been conceived with more conſummate ſkill and addreſs, or better qualified to kindle a ſpirit of ambition in a royal breaſt, to excel in hoſe amiable qualifications which add importance to majeſty.

It is the higheſt and moſt intereſting duty of ſovereigns to adminiſter juſtice to their ſubjects, and prove themſelves the determined enemies of every ſpecies of partiality. Accordingly, a deep conviction of the magnitude of this truth induced the Egyptian kings to ſtudy this with indefatigable care, becauſe the happineſs and proſperity of individuals depended upon it, and by an obvious conſequence, the felicity and permanency of the ſtate, which is nothing more than the aggregate of its individuals. Without the impartial adminiſtration of public juſtice, the weak and defenceleſs would be left deſtitute of protection or redreſs, while the great and opulent would triumph with impunity in the perpetration of wickedneſs. But as the monarch of an extenſive country cannot poſſibly be every where, to adminiſter juſtice in perſon, it was an eſtabliſhed cuſtom in Egypt to ſelect thirty men for judges out of the principal cities of the empire, in the choice of whom no perſonal or private attachment

ment had any concern. The princes, in calling them to an office at once honorable and important, had purely a reference to merit, which ought always to be the case. They were nominated on account of their sacred regard to a principle of honesty, and so were antipodes to that accursed monster judge Jefferies, whose very name will stink in the nostrils of humanity to the end of time. The person who was made president of this august assembly, and who resembled a lord chief justice in this country, was chosen on account of his super-eminent knowledge and love of the laws.

As the people of every nation have a natural right to justice without fee or reward, the judges of Egypt were enabled to determine causes gratuitously, by reason of the bounty of their sovereigns, who allowed them an easy independence. This put it into the power of the meanest person to have his

his wrongs redreſſed, a ſtep perfectly agreeable to the eternal reaſon and fitneſs of things, ſince poverty expoſes in an eminent manner to injury and oppreſſion, and of conſequence calls aloud for the defence of the laws.

The Egyptians were no advocates for that ſpecies of eloquence which only touches the paſſions without informing the underſtanding, and therefore the reader will not be ſurpriſed to hear, that they were abſolute ſtrangers to the eloquence of the bar. Truth, in their judgement, could never be expreſſed with too much plainneſs and perſpicuity nor that eloquence be too much deteſted which could endeavour to make light darkneſs, and darkneſs light. Cauſes were purely decided by the ſolemn deliberation of the judges, and the preſident gave notice to a pannel that he was acquitted, or his opponent nonſuited, if a trial at *niſi prius*, as we expreſs it, by touching him with a golden chain.

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It is to be lamented that the laws of moſt countries are involved in ſuch myſticiſm and jargon, that men are deterred from the ſtudy of them, except they intend to procure their living by continuing them in obſcurity. In ſome places a man may get plenty of *law* without any *juſtice*, but law and juſtice in Egypt were ſynonimous expreſſions. Nay, ſo plain and perſpicuous was the language in which the laws were couched, that men, from their youngeſt years, were brought up in the ſtudy and obſervance of them. Revolutions in ſtates and empires are often neceſſary and highly juſtifiable, but as the government of Egypt was perfectly ſuited to the circumſtances and ſituation of men; calculated to promote their felicity and defend them from every ſpecies of oppreſſion, innovation was neither to be dreaded by the ſovereign nor deſired by the ſubject. When the inhabitants of any country are as happy and as much freed from oppreſſion as ratationable

creatures can deſire to be, a revolutionary wiſh would be a downright miracle.

It is a defect in the laws, not of one, but of every country under heaven, that no adequate proportion is eſtabliſhed between crimes and puniſhments. A man is hanged for ſtealing a ſheep, and he is only hanged for deliberate murder. A living ſheep coſts him his life, while I believe he may be acquitted for taking a dead one. Thus his exiſtence is made to turn on the value of the ſkin, guts, and blood, which he carries off in the one caſe and not in the other. No ſyſtem of juriſprudence was ever equal to that of the Jews, from which it would ſeem the ancient Egyptians borrowed their wiſeſt and moſt ſalutary regulations.

The laws which God gave to the poſterity of Jacob proceeded upon this immutable and eternal maxim, that no crimes ought to be puniſhed with death, but ſuch as put it out of

of the power of their perpetrators to make complete reſtitution, either by perſonal ſervitude, or the payment of money in any determined ratio. Thus adultery was puniſhed with death as well as murder, ſince the injury done in both caſes is equally irreparable. While the laws of moſt countries ſeem to have been framed by a boy in his firſt breeches, thoſe of the Egyptians, taken, without peradventure, from the forementioned ſource, did honor to the wiſeſt and moſt ſcientific people upon earth. They alſo puniſhed every man with death who was guilty of perjury, becauſe it is a crime which not only tramples under foot the ſtrongeſt bond of ſociety, the ſolemnity of an oath, but offers the moſt terrible inſult to an all-ſeeing God. Whatever puniſhment an accuſed perſon would have ſuffered, if fully convicted, was endured by the accuſer when detected of falſehood. It is impoſſible to conceive any thing more juſt and equitable than this, or better calculated to check the

operation of malice and revenge. Nay, if a man did not uſe his utmoſt endeavors to reſcue his neighbour from the hands of the aſſaſſin, he was as ſeverely puniſhed as the ruffian deſerved. This law was founded on an obvious fact, that all men are brethren, and could not fail to inſpire them with benevolence and good will to each other.

The Egyptians paid a very high degree of reſpect to ſuch as were arrived at an advanced period of life, being well aſſured that no object ſo venerable in nature can preſent itſelf to the eye. An old man's very whims and foibles ſit eaſy upon him, which in the time of youth would create contempt. His ſage remarks and accumulated experience render his company both agreeable and inſtructive. Honor the aged, ſay the ſacred oracles, and riſe up before the grey-headed. This is a ſevere check to many profeſſing chriſ-

chriſtians, who frequently convert the infirmities of old men into a ſubject of ridicule.

The Egyptians alſo paid uncommon reſpect to gratitude, that noble virtue, becauſe it unites men together ſo invincibly in the bonds of ſocial union, that no foreign enemy of equal force dare ever attempt their deſtruction. He who is deeply ſenſible of favors received, muſt always feel a high degree of pleaſure in beſtowing favor upon others.

The origin of the Egyptian monarchy, ſetting aſide every thing plainly fictitious and abſurd, can be hiſtorically traced back no farther than to Mizraim, the grandſon of Noah, running in a regular ſucceſſion down to the year of the world 3479, when it was deſtroyed by Cambyſes king of Perſia. It then became ſubject to the Greeks alſo, which ended with the death of Alexander

the Great, and a new monarchy was erected under the Ptolemies, which ended with Cleopatra, whore to Cæsar and Mark Anthony. It is now a province of the Turkish Empire, although it is extremely problematical how long either it or the Turkish empire may have any political existence, having to contend with a formidable foreign enemy, and oppose the terrible progress of domestic rebellion.

We have said that the government of ancient Egypt was an absolute monarchy, and therefore some may be apt to imagine it the best form possible, since the inhabitants enjoyed happiness under it for many hundred years. Let it, however, be remembered, that this was only while their princes were alike subject to the laws with their people, and studied the felicity of the whole like a science. By the introduction of luxury and effeminacy, the sovereigns of Egypt ventured

tured to become tyrants, only becauſe the people were ſtupid enough to ſubmit to be ſlaves Subjects may be happy under an abſolute monarchy for whole centuries together, but that this is no reaſon why men ſhould ever be in love with it I ſhall conclude with a ſhort ſurvey of its nature and tendency.

Abſolute monarchy is, when both legiſlative and executive authority are in the hands of one man, who may be an ideot or a tyrant, as well as benevolent or wiſe. To have fifteen or twenty millions of creatures under the management of a ſingle individual, who, to ſatisfy his wanton cruelty, may ſacrifice thouſands of his ſubjects, without a fault either committed or aſſigned as a defence of ſuch a ſtep, is a ſituation at which humanity trembles. Myriads unknown, unpitied and untried, may expire amidſt the horrors of a gloomy baſtile, or terminate a wretched exiſtence on the rack of an Inquiſition. If an

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abſolute monarch is ever wiſe and good (neither of which qualifications can be made hereditary) to manage the ſtupendous machine of government would be too much for his exertions. When troubles ariſe, perhaps unprecedented and unexpected, the wiſdom of a Solomon would be too feeble of itſelf. If he is weak and wicked, and ſurrounded by creatures who act in concert with him, but in ſubordination to his authority, their approbation of his meaſures will heighten his opinion of himſelf, and make him glory in the perpetration of ſuch deeds as are a diſgrace to humanity. If, by a happy concurrence of circumſtances, he is ſurrounded with honeſt, upright, benevolent men, they can only lay their ſentiments proſtrate at his feet, and perhaps have the mortification to ſee them rejected, without daring to complain. If they urge the propriety of adopting certain meaſures which run counter to his ideas and advices, it is a thouſand to one if they eſcape unpuniſhed. A graceleſs favorite, though

though only a menial ſervant, or a beloved miſtreſs who has the management of his heart, may induce him to ſign the death-warrant of the moſt illuſtrious perſonage that ever approached his throne. If he is juſt and good, he may be a bleſſing to his ſubjects, in ſo far as individual exertions are adequate to the taſk of governing; but he muſt often do injury, even without intending it. If the reverſe of this be his character (and no ſecurity to the contrary can ever be given) the Lord have mercy upon the people who are ſubjected to his ſway! When the ſun peeps above the horizon, he may behold them unſuſpicious of danger, and yet, before he reaches the weſtern ſky, ſee thouſands arreſted by royal tyranny and vengeance. From the ſolitary monarch to the keeper of a common priſon, the ramifications of tyranny ſuck the vitals from benevolence. In this horrid climax of barbarity and deſpotiſm, every gradation is big with terror, and offers calumny a premium for ſlander and abuſe.

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The inferior branches of tyranny are often guilty of ten thouſand acts of cruelty with which the ſovereign is wholly unacquainted. But, alas! though unacquainted with them, he is not thereby ſcreened from the puniſhment they juſtly deſerve. When rational inveſtigation, like a ſhock of electricity, rouſes a nation to a ſenſe of its ſtate, the ſuppoſed author of all their evils is the object of popular fury. As he has all the merit of every laudable ſtep in the legiſlative and executive branches of government, while he is in reality entitled perhaps to none of it; ſo he is unfortunately conſidered as the author of every miſchief, though he ſhould be altogether as innocent as the unborn babe. Theſe are conſiderations ſufficient to diſguſt any king at the idea of being made an abſolute monarch, and to keep ſubjects vigilant in guarding againſt its inroads. It is a ſlaughter-houſe for the people, and the Aceldama of princes. There is ſomething in its very eſſence which merits the mutual abhorrence

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of ſovereign and ſubject. It may prove a fatal enemy to both, and it can never be a real friend to neither. It places the lives of millions on the footing of a lottery, and the inſinuations of malice are a ticket for the ſcaffold. It lays a temptation before a king to be wicked, which he can hardly reſiſt; and if he acts up to the full extent of his prerogative royal over an enlightened people, there is little probability that he will die in his bed. Though it ſhould therefore be granted that the ancient Egyptians long enjoyed happineſs under abſolute princes, let none admire it upon that account, and hope to be equally happy by trying the experiment.

THE END.

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